

Travel advice for children and families

Most travel-related health problems can be prevented by visiting your doctor ideally two months prior to travel for advice regarding immunisations, travel medicines and safety precautions. This is particularly important for travel to developing or tropical countries. For safety recommendations for specific countries, refer to smartraveller.gov.au and ensure you have travel insurance before you leave.

It is important to discuss with your doctor before travelling:

- Your medical and immunisation history.
- Timing, location (including city or rural), duration and season of travel.
- Planned activities during travel (e.g. visiting farms or animals, water activities).
- Places you will stay during travel (e.g., hotel, visiting friends and family).

What if my child has a health condition, and we want to travel overseas?

- It is important to plan ahead: discuss with your treating specialist/doctor for advice regarding risk and suitability for travel.
- Prior to travel, make sure you have all the medication you may need and enough supply of regular medication for the duration of the trip: you may not be able to access your child's specific medication and/or the preparation they are used to in other countries.
- Take medication in its original pharmacy packaging with the dispensing label intact, along with a copy of the prescription and a letter from the prescriber detailing the required medication(s), doses and indication(s) for use. Medications should be carried in your hand luggage, with an extra supply in checked-in luggage.
- Travelers who require syringes to administer medication, should carry those syringes along with a letter from a healthcare provider documenting a medical need for the syringes.
- Travelers should be aware of any restrictions on medications in the country of travel. Some countries have strict rules regarding bringing in certain types of medication (e.g., opioids, stimulants), even if prescribed and for personal use.

Travel immunisations: It is important children are up to date with routine immunisations on the WA immunisation schedule. Additional travel immunisations may be recommended, depending on the area of travel. Discuss with your doctor for further advice.

Food and water precautions: Travellers are at risk of infection from consumption of unclean food or water (e.g. travellers' diarrhoea, hepatitis A, typhoid fever). Water and food precautions are important to reduce the risk of infection. Hand washing with soap and water after visiting the toilet, and before preparing or eating food is important. Alcohol gel may be helpful after handwashing (applied to dry hands), when hand-washing facilities are not available and prior to eating.



Water precautions

- ✓ Boil water for three minutes, followed by cooling, to sterilise (clean) the water for drinking.
- ✓ Filtration devices or chemical disinfection agents (e.g. chlorine tablets) may be used to clean water for drinking, when boiled water is not available.
- ✗ Do not drink or brush teeth with unboiled tap water.
- ✗ Avoid drinks with ice cubes as some outlets may use water straight from the tap.
- ✗ Be wary of locally bottled water; consider carbonated drinks if water is not in clearly sealed bottles.
- ✗ In some places, avoid wading or swimming in fresh water.

Food precautions

- ✓ Eat fresh, well-cooked food.
- ✓ Eat fruit that can be peeled by yourself (e.g. bananas and oranges).
- ✓ Eat only pasteurised dairy products such as yoghurts, milk and cheese (check the food label).
- ✗ Avoid salads and uncooked (raw) fruit and vegetables.
- ✗ Do not eat food that is left uncovered in warm environments e.g. buffet or street trader food.
- ✗ Avoid raw or undercooked meat, fish or shellfish, including oysters.

Insect and tick bite precautions

In some areas, insects (mosquitoes, flies, fleas) and arachnids (ticks and mites) can spread potentially serious infections. The risk varies depending on the area of travel. Discuss with your doctor for specific advice. Some important things you can do to lower your risk of infection include:

- Before travelling, buy a DEET or picaridin containing insect repellent to bring with you.
 - Insect repellents with up to 30% DEET are safe to use in babies over two months of age.
- Cover exposed skin with light-coloured clothing, including long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Use mosquito netting (permethrin treated is preferred) over your bed if not sleeping in an air-conditioned or screened room. For some areas it may also be advisable to treat your clothing and gear (e.g., tents, sleep sheets) with permethrin prior to travel.
- Where possible, minimise time spent outdoors at dusk and dawn.
- Avoid using products with strong perfume (e.g., soaps) which might attract insects.
- After walking through brush or high grasses in tick-prone areas, remember to brush off your clothes and check yourself and others for ticks. It is also advisable to tumble dry clothes for at least 20 minutes to kill any attached ticks after outdoor activities in tick-prone areas.

Using insect repellents safely with children

- The concentration of DEET or picaridin in insect repellents affects the length of time the repellent works for, not its ability to repel insects and mosquitoes. Always use and reapply insect repellents in accordance with the product instructions on the label.
- Ensure repellent is not ingested or inhaled; preferably use a roll-on or if using a spray, spray into your hands before applying to your child. Avoid contact with lips and eyes. Wash hands after application.
- Do not apply to young children's fingers/hands as they may place them into their mouth.
- Avoid applying repellent under your child's clothing.
- After returning indoors, wash any residual repellent off with soap and water.
- When both sunscreen and insect repellent are needed, apply SPF 50+ sunscreen to the skin first.

Malaria prevention

Malaria is a serious infection that is spread by infected mosquitoes, present in certain parts of the world. Oral antimalarial medications may be recommended in addition to the general measures for avoiding insect bites listed above; discuss with your doctor for further advice.

Other travel precautions

- Do some research before leaving into the availability and quality of healthcare at your destination, especially if you and/or your child have a chronic medical condition.
- Water, soil, and sand can contain infection-causing organisms in some areas of the world. In general, wear shoes that cover your feet completely.
- Discuss with your doctor about ways to avoid altitude sickness if travelling to a high-altitude destination.
- In countries where schistosomiasis (a water parasitic infection) is common, travellers should avoid swimming in fresh water; check if this is a risk with your doctor.
- Travellers or returning travellers with a fever (temperature above 38 degrees) or other concerning symptoms should seek prompt medical review.



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This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.

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