

HOLIDAY TIPS

We are now in the height of holiday season, with many people heading abroad on their holidays it is important to be aware of dangers you will not encounter in Ireland.

There are several **diseases** that travelers should be particularly aware of, including hepatitis A, typhoid and malaria.

Hepatitis A is a liver infection that is contracted from contaminated food or water or from close contact with someone who's already infected. Practicing good hygiene is one way to protect against catching the hepatitis A virus. A vaccine is also available.

Typhoid is contracted in the same way as hepatitis A but is caused by a bacterium instead of a virus. The bacterium, called *Salmonella typhi*, enters the intestines and can then spread to the bloodstream. Antibiotics are used to treat typhoid but it is recommended that you get vaccinated against the disease if you are visiting at-risk areas. Typhoid is found in large parts of Asia, Africa, Central and South America.

Malaria on the rise in Ireland, mainly due to increased numbers of Irish people traveling to tropical destinations. No anti-malarial drug is 100pc effective but they can significantly lessen the chances of getting the disease. The newer varieties, like *Malarone*, tend not to have the same side effects as previous medications. Different anti-malarial drugs are needed in different parts of the world due to different strains of malaria and hence different resistance to drugs. You need a prescription to obtain malaria medication.

Top tips for your travels

Firstly, you should check out what vaccinations and malaria medication are advised for your destination. You can find out on the World Health Organisation's travel health website (www.who.int/ith). Alternatively your pharmacist or GP will gladly advice on vaccinations needed. Vaccines and anti malaria medicines are generally not needed in Europe or the US.

Flying

Changes in the air pressure on planes can exacerbate sinus problems and discomfort in the ears during and after flying. Taking a decongestant on the day of travel can reduce or avoid this problem. Avoid decongestants if you have high blood pressure. Flight socks can reduce the chances of developing deep vein thrombosis (DVT). Drinking plenty of water and avoiding drinks that dehydrate you such as tea, coffee and alcohol will reduce risk of DVT.

Jet Lag

Our bodies adjust to a natural rhythm that promotes sleeping at night and being active and alert during daylight hours. When we travel across different 'time zones' our normal rhythm is altered. This can cause sleep disturbances, inability to concentrate and irritability which is more commonly known as 'jet lag'.

In order to prevent jet lag you should get a good night sleep before the journey. Also you should rest as much as possible during the flight. Some people find that changing their watch to the destination time helps. On arrival at your destination you should get active as soon as possible and adjust your meals and activities to local time as soon as possible. Exposure to light allows your body to adjust. Try not to sleep until nightfall when you arrive at your destination otherwise you will be out of tune with the local time. If you need a nap when you arrive, keep it short, otherwise you will be wide awake at night and it will take your body longer to adjust. Also avoid alcohol, it will only take recovery from jet lag longer.

Melatonin has been available in the USA for jet lag for many years, however research is limited. Melatonin is newly available in Ireland on prescription only for short term insomnia for patients over 55. It is called Circadin[®] but is not licensed for jet lag.

Sun

Most people make the mistake of not applying sun cream regularly. It is important to reapply sun cream every 2 to 3 hours. Apply at least 30 minutes before going into the sun. An SPF factor of 15 or more should be used. Sun cream should be reapplied after swimming and bathing. The sun should be avoided between noon and 3pm when it is strongest.

Food poisoning

Food poisoning is one of the most common travel illnesses. Freshly cooked, hot food is always the safest option, as salads, cold meats and uncooked/undercooked seafood are all more prone to be infected with bacteria and parasites. Opt for bottled water instead of tap water and avoid ice in your drinks.

Mosquito Bites

Mosquito bites can lead to malaria. Try to get a room with air conditioning so that you can keep the doors and windows closed. Use an insect repellent, avoid perfume and wear light coloured clothes. An insect repellent with DEET is more effective but should be avoided if you have sensitive skin, in pregnancy, children and asthmatics. Bug Band[®] is an insecticide free wrist band which is now proving very popular at Whelehans as an insect repellent.

Malaria

The symptoms of malaria are very similar to flu symptoms (they include fever, nausea, exhaustion and mild diarrhea). Malaria should be treated immediately as it is potentially fatal. The disease may not show itself for months after you return from your travels so see your doctor if you start to feel unwell and tell him or her that you've been to a malaria-risk area.

Holiday Checklist

- **Sun Protection** (Ambre Solaire sun creams are Half Price in Whelehans)
- **After Sun**
- **Insect Repellent**
- **Bug Band** -The drug free insect repellent
- **Anthisan Cream** (for insect bites)
- **Imodium Plus** (Stomach cramps & diarrhoea)
- **Domerid Tablets** (for upset Stomach)
- **Ranitic Tablets** (for indigestion)
- **Painkillers** (e.g.) Paracetamol.
- **Dioralyte Sachets** (for dehydration prevention during diarrhea)
- **Sunglasses**
- **Scholl Flight Socks** (to reduce the risk of clots while flying)
- **Antiseptic cream**

Don't forget, to get free advice about what vaccines and malaria medication you need for your travels, call in to Whelehans.

Disclaimer: Please ensure you consult with your healthcare professional before making any changes recommended

For comprehensive and free health advice and information call in to Whelehans, log on to www.whelehans.ie or dial 04493 34591.