

## The Basics of Travel Medicine

Robert Steffen, Division of Epidemiology and Prevention of Communicable Diseases, World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Travellers' Health, University of Zurich, Switzerland

As illustrated by the 10 tips for healthy travel issued by the International Society of Travel Medicine ([www.istm.org](http://www.istm.org)), travel medicine is interdisciplinary and by no means limited to infectious diseases. Aspects from public health, physiology, pediatrics, psychiatry, etc. often need to be considered. On the basis of evidence from epidemiological data recommendations are mainly formulated on preventive measures and on self-therapy abroad:

### ***Before trip***

**Seek** consultation with a travel medicine specialist at least one month before travel.

**Ask** about special vaccines that are recommended for specific destinations.

**First aid and medical kit** containing regular and special medication for the trip – carry in hand luggage.

**Evacuation and travel insurance** to cover health emergencies while abroad.

### ***During trip***

**Take precautions** against malaria when you visit areas at risk. Prevent mosquito bites and take malaria pills as advised.

**Road safety** is important – wear safety belt in cars, helmet on bikes and avoid night time driving.

**Abstain** from casual sex or practice safe sex with condoms to prevent HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

**Verify and consume** safe water and food. Have a supply of medicine for self treatment of diarrhea.

**Excessive sun exposure** should be minimized by use of sunscreen. Sun can be more intense over water, snow and at altitude.

**Leave animals alone.** Animal bites or scratches can transmit rabies. Seek help if bitten.

*IF fever develops during or after trip, seek competent medical help immediately.*

*Have a **safe travel!***