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Hot Topics - Travel Safety Tips This Christmas

December is a popular time to take a holiday and while most people have few health problems there is the potential for everything from jet lag to tropical diseases.

If you have a medical condition, make sure you take enough medication for the whole trip. Be sure to split the medication into two lots and keep one with you so if your luggage goes missing, you will still have a supply. Weekly medication packs are a handy travel tool.

It is important to travel with a well stocked first aid kit and know when and how to use everything in it.

Some useful items to include are:

- sunscreen
- insect repellent
- water purification tablets/solutions
- oral rehydration salts and Imodium as a treatment for diarrhoea
- laxatives such as Coloxyl and Senna
- antihistamines for hay fever or itchiness (such as Claramax)
- pain killers
- first aid items – such as Band-Aids, gloves, and alcohol wipes.
- anti-motion sickness tablets

Insect bites can be a real problem but taking some simple steps may ease the situation. Cover as much of the skin as possible with clothing and avoid being outdoors two hours either side of dawn and dusk.

Use insect repellents containing at least 30% DEET (diethyltoluamide) and reapply them regularly. Also spray the room you will be sleeping in with insecticidal spray.

Travel sickness can make a trip very unpleasant. To alleviate the symptoms avoid fatty or spicy foods and eat a light meal about an hour before you travel. Eating ginger half an hour before your journey may help.

Make sure you face the direction in which you are travelling and choose the most stable area. In a car that is the front seat, on a plane it is over the wing and on a ship it is on the deck.

Distracting yourself while travelling is a good idea. However avoid activities that encourage you to look down. Ask your pharmacist whether a travel sickness preparation such as Sea-Legs would be suitable for you.

If you are lucky enough to be travelling overseas there are a few extra things to think about. Make sure you visit your doctor at least six weeks before you leave to discuss your travel requirements such as anti-malarial medication or vaccinations.

To avoid contaminated water the golden rule is "cook it, boil it, peel it or forget it!" Take care not to swallow water in the shower, pools or while brushing your teeth and make sure any food you eat is cooked, freshly prepared and piping hot.

The risk of deep vein thrombosis is higher when traveling long distances. There are products available to help prevent it, such as aspirin and compression stockings. **Bon Voyage!**