



Chapter 2

The Pre-Travel Consultation Counseling and Advice for Travelers

[Chapter 2: Perspectives: PPD Testing of Travelers \(/travel/yellowbook/2010/chapter-2/ppd-testing-travelers.aspx\)](#)

[Chapter 2: Obtaining Health Care Abroad for the Ill Traveler \(/travel/yellowbook/2010/chapter-2/health-care-abroad-for-the-ill-traveler.aspx\)](#)

TRAVEL HEALTH KITS

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The purpose of packing a travel health kit is to ensure travelers have supplies they need to—

- manage pre-existing medical conditions and treat any exacerbations of these conditions,
- prevent illness related to traveling, and
- take care of minor health problems as they occur.

Traveling with Medications

When medications are necessary for travel, it is important to remember the following:

- **Original containers:** All medications should be carried in their original containers with clear labels, so the contents are easily identified. Although many travelers like placing medications into small containers or packing them in the daily-dose containers, officials at ports of entry may require proper identification of medications.
- **Prescriptions:** Travelers should carry copies of all prescriptions, including their generic names.
- **Physician notes:** For controlled substances and injectable medications, travelers are advised to carry a note from the prescribing physician on letterhead stationery.
- **Restricted medications:** Travelers should be aware that certain medications are not permitted in certain countries. If there is a question about these restrictions, particularly with controlled substances, travelers are recommended to contact the embassy or consulate of the destination country.
- **Availability:** A travel health kit is useful only when it is available. It should be carried with the traveler at all times (e.g., in a carry-on bag). Due to airline security rules, sharp objects and some liquids and gels must remain in checked luggage.

Pre-Existing Medical Condition Supplies

Travelers with pre-existing medical conditions are advised to carry enough medication for the duration of their trip and an extra supply, in case the trip is extended for any reason. If additional supplies or medications are needed for the management of exacerbations of existing medical conditions, these should be carried as well. The health-care provider managing a traveler's pre-existing medical conditions should be consulted for the best plan of action (see the section Traveling with Chronic Medical Illnesses in Chapter 8).

Persons with pre-existing conditions, such as diabetes or allergies to envenomations or medications, should consider wearing an alert bracelet and making sure this information is on a card in their wallet and with their other travel documents.

General Travel Health Kit Supplies

A variety of health kits is available commercially and may even be purchased over the Internet (see below); however, similar kits can be assembled at

home, often at lower cost. The specific contents of the health kit are based on destination, duration of travel, type of travel, and the traveler's pre-existing medical conditions.

Although this is not a comprehensive list, basic items that should be considered are listed below. See Chapters 7 and 8 for additional suggestions that may be useful in planning the contents of a kit for travelers with specific needs.

Medications

- Destination-related, if applicable:
 - Antimalarial medications
 - Medication to prevent or treat high-altitude illness
- Pain or fever (one or more of the following, or an alternative):
 - Acetaminophen
 - Aspirin
 - Ibuprofen
- Stomach upset or diarrhea:
 - Over-the-counter antidiarrheal medication (such as loperamide or bismuth subsalicylate)
 - Antibiotic for self-treatment of moderate to severe diarrhea
 - Oral rehydration solution packets
 - Mild laxative
 - Antacid
- Items to treat throat and respiratory symptoms:
 - Antihistamine
 - Decongestant, alone or in combination with antihistamine
 - Cough suppressant/expectorant
 - Throat lozenges
- Anti-motion sickness medication.
- Epinephrine auto-injector (such as an EpiPen), especially if history of severe allergic reaction. Smaller-dose packages are available for children.
- Any medications, prescription or over the counter, taken on a regular basis at home.

Basic First Aid

- Disposable gloves (at least two pairs)
- Adhesive bandages, multiple sizes
- Gauze
- Adhesive tape
- Elastic bandage wrap for sprains and strains
- Antiseptic
- Cotton swabs

- Tweezers*
- Scissors*
- Antifungal and antibacterial ointments or creams
- 1% hydrocortisone cream
- Anti-itch gel or cream for insect bites and stings
- Aloe gel for sunburns
- Moleskin or molefoam for blisters
- Digital thermometer
- Saline eye drops
- First-aid quick reference card

Other Important Items

- Insect repellent
- Sunscreen (SPF 15 or greater)
- Antibacterial hand wipes or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol
- Useful items in certain circumstances:
 - Extra pair of contacts or prescription glasses, or both, for people who wear corrective lenses
 - Mild sedative (such as zolpidem), other sleep aid, or anti-anxiety medication
 - Latex condoms
 - Water purification tablets
 - Commercial suture/syringe kits to be used by a local health-care provider. (These items will also require a letter from the prescribing physician on letterhead stationery.)

**Note:* Pack these items in checked baggage, since they may be considered sharp objects and confiscated by airport or airline security if packed in carry-on bags.

Contact Card

It is also important for travelers to locate and record important contact information, in case it is needed during their trip. Often this information is needed quickly; having a contact card with the following items will help save time in these urgent situations.

Items to include on a contact card should be the address and phone numbers of the following:

- Family member or close contact still in the United States
- Health-care provider at home
- Area hospitals or clinics
- U.S. Embassy or Consulate in the destination country or countries

See the next section in this chapter, Obtaining Health Care Abroad for the Ill Traveler, for information about how to locate local health care and embassy/consulate contacts.

Commercial Medical Kits

Commercial medical kits are available for a wide range of circumstances, from basic first aid to advanced emergency life support. Many pharmacy, grocery, retail, and outdoor sporting goods stores sell their own basic first-aid kits. Travelers who choose to purchase a health kit rather than assemble their own should be certain to review the contents of the kit carefully to ensure that it has everything needed; additional items may be necessary.

For more adventurous travelers, a number of companies produce advanced medical kits and will even customize kits based on specific travel needs.

In addition, specialty kits are available for managing diabetes, dealing with dental emergencies, and handling aquatic environments.

Below is a list of websites supplying a wide range of medical kits. There are many suppliers, and this list is not meant to be all-inclusive.

- American Red Cross: [www.redcrossstore.org \(/travel/forward.aspx?t=aHR0cDovL3d3dy5yZWVjcm9zc3N0b3JlLm9yZWw%3d%3d-o%2fYIF%2bielw%3d\)](http://www.redcrossstore.org (/travel/forward.aspx?t=aHR0cDovL3d3dy5yZWVjcm9zc3N0b3JlLm9yZWw%3d%3d-o%2fYIF%2bielw%3d)
- Adventure Medical Kits: [www.adventuremedicalkits.com \(/travel/forward.aspx?t=aHR0cDovL3d3dy5hZHZlbnR1cmVtZWVpY2Fsa2l0cy5jb20%3d-anicEpmPH%2bY%3d\)](http://www.adventuremedicalkits.com (/travel/forward.aspx?t=aHR0cDovL3d3dy5hZHZlbnR1cmVtZWVpY2Fsa2l0cy5jb20%3d-anicEpmPH%2bY%3d)
- Chinook Medical Gear: [www.chinookmed.com \(/travel/forward.aspx?t=aHR0cDovL3d3dy5jaGlub29rbWVvLmNvbQ%3d%3d-0cEZv%2fSEfWg%3d\)](http://www.chinookmed.com (/travel/forward.aspx?t=aHR0cDovL3d3dy5jaGlub29rbWVvLmNvbQ%3d%3d-0cEZv%2fSEfWg%3d)
- Travel Medicine, Inc.: [www.travmed.com \(/travel/forward.aspx?t=aHR0cDovL3d3dy50cmF2bWVvLmNvbQ%3d%3d-ClpJ3xBjF4A%3d\)](http://www.travmed.com (/travel/forward.aspx?t=aHR0cDovL3d3dy50cmF2bWVvLmNvbQ%3d%3d-ClpJ3xBjF4A%3d)
- Wilderness Medicine Outfitters: [www.wildernessmedicine.com \(/travel/forward.aspx?t=aHR0cDovL3d3dy53aWxkZXJvZXNzbWVkaWNpbmUuY29t-pcptZFJvtIQ%3d\)](http://www.wildernessmedicine.com (/travel/forward.aspx?t=aHR0cDovL3d3dy53aWxkZXJvZXNzbWVkaWNpbmUuY29t-pcptZFJvtIQ%3d)

References

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2. Reynolds SA, Levy F, Walker ES. Hand sanitizer alert. *Emerg Infect Dis*. 2006;12(3):527–9.

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National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases (NCEZID) (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncezid/>)
Division of Global Migration and Quarantine (DGMQ) (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncezid/dgmq/index.html>)



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