

## Advice Sheet for Travellers



Retirement may allow you the opportunity and time to travel more frequently or to visit friends and relatives who live abroad.

Age is no barrier to travel but planning ahead can help to prevent your trip from being spoiled by illness or accidents.

Allow plenty of time for a pre-travel consultation to plan and prepare for your trip. Book an appointment with your doctor or practice nurse to discuss your individual needs at least 6-8 weeks before you travel.

Discuss any pre-existing health conditions with your doctor or nurse to ensure that now is a safe time to travel. Be honest with yourself and assess your own personal fitness. Travel can be tiring and high temperatures and unfamiliar cultures may exacerbate this. Choose your destination and type of holiday according to your own abilities.

### Vaccinations:

Vaccinations are important for travellers of any age; however some travel vaccines may not be suitable for you. Ask your doctor about the vaccinations you may need for your chosen destination before booking your holiday. Remember that even if you have already had a particular vaccination you may need a booster dose. Travelling to the Southern Hemisphere between April and November may mean that you will need to consider a flu vaccination on your arrival. Ask your GP for advice.

### Insurance:

Comprehensive travel insurance is essential for your trip and the activities you plan to take part in. Ensure that it includes the cost of repatriation if necessary and always declare any existing medical conditions, be aware that travel insurance may exclude treatment of such conditions. If necessary, seek advice on insurance which will cover you if a pre-existing condition worsens during your trip.

A European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) entitles you to free or reduced rate state-provided medical care in most EU countries. You can apply for one online ([www.dh.gov.uk/](http://www.dh.gov.uk/)), by phone (0845 606 2030) or by post using a form from the Post Office. However you should be aware of the limitations of the scheme an **EHIC is not a substitute for adequate holiday insurance.**

### Medication:

Remember to take a sufficient amount of any medication you normally take to last for the whole trip with some extra to cover possible delays. Always keep your medicine in the correctly labelled container and carry it with you in your hand luggage. A letter from your doctor outlining your personal health and treatment may also be useful.

You will also need to find out if there are any restrictions on taking your

medicines in and out of the UK or the country you are visiting. Some medicines available over the counter in the UK may be controlled in other countries, and vice versa. Ask the relevant embassy or high commission, contact the Home Office Drugs Branch on 020 7035 0472 or check the Home Office website.

### **Food and Drink:**

Be particularly careful about the food and drink you enjoy on holiday. Remember the golden rule **Boil it, Cook it, Peel it or Forget it!** If you do develop traveller's diarrhoea, take great care to avoid dehydration by drinking plenty of non-alcoholic drinks. Pack some sachets of oral rehydration fluid (available from pharmacies in the UK) with your first aid kit.

### **During a flight:**

Older travellers are at an increased risk of deep vein thrombosis (DVT). There is some evidence that long-haul flights, especially when you have little or no exercise, may increase the risk of developing DVT. Many airlines provide information on gentle exercises that you can do in your seat, like rotating your ankles and wiggling your toes. Get up and walk around regularly if you can and stay hydrated with non-alcoholic drinks.

If you have other risk factors for DVT e.g. if you or a close family member have experienced blood clots in the past, you have had recent surgery lasting more than 30 minutes or you are on hormone treatment or suffering from cancer, discuss what other precautions you may need to take with your GP.

### **Disabled travellers**

Increased awareness and new legislation are making travel easier for people with disabilities. The international symbol for disability, the wheelchair, is now universally accepted.

In most countries, transportation operators - whether coach, train or air - expect to assist you. If you are disabled find out in advance how to get to the boarding point and ask the travel provider/company to reserve suitable seating for you. If you have special needs you should confirm your travel plans and requirements in writing with the transport operator and hotel. Make sure you have a copy of this confirmation with you on arrival.

### **Before you go**

It may be unsafe to travel to some countries or to certain areas within a country. Before you go, research your chosen destination, ideally prior to booking a trip.

For up to date country information before you travel visit the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website ([www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)) or call their advice line on **0845 850 2829**.

This leaflet has been prepared by Sanofi Pasteur MSD to give you general information on issues relating to healthy travel. It is not meant as an alternative to individual advice and should be used in conjunction with advice provided for you by a health care professional.