

HEALTH TIPS for Travelling in Asia

By Dr. Lily Wong

ASIA, ESPECIALLY southeast Asia, is a cultural destination loved worldwide due to culinary delights of the region. This continent is known for its fantastic tourist attractions, diverse cultural experiences, dense populations and delicious recipes. Travel in Asia can be exciting but it also presents some potential hazards that could turn your trip into a visit to the health clinic. Proper preparation before and during your trip can go a long way toward making sure your visit to the largest continent is safe and healthy. The following tips can help.

Eat Healthy Food

Make sure that all the foodstuff you eat is thoroughly cooked. Beware of any reheated food (especially rice) as it can lead to diarrhea and other infectious diseases. Avoid uncooked salads and vegetables as they may have been washed in contaminated water. Eat only fruits and vegetables that you can peel and avoid fruit that

is already cut up into slices. Avoid unpasteurized milk, yogurt, cheese, raw or undercooked meat, shellfish, and fish. Do not eat food from street vendors and hawkers as it is associated with a higher risk of becoming ill. Make sure the place where you go for eating (e.g. public restaurants) is a popular eating spot (take information using Google and social media). These sites are likely to have good hygiene practices and a better turnover of foods.

Water and beverages

Avoid drinking unboiled or untreated tap water. Drinking or touching untreated water can lead to diarrhea and vomiting or other types of infection. It's better to drink bottled water that is purified and quality tested. Avoid use of ice cubes, as these may be made with contaminated tap water. Also avoid iced coffee, iced tea, and fruit drinks. To disinfect water, boil it for at least one minute and then let it cool. Water purification tablets (containing chlorine or iodine) are also available to purify water.



Emergency medicine travel kit

A small, portable health kit with the essentials should be with you at all times. It could be life-saving and a source of convenience, avoiding the need to seek immediate medical care. The circumstances of your trip will significantly influence what you should choose to include. While travelling to Asia, consider

including the following in your travel health kit: essential first-aid items (ace bandage, bandages, gauze, antiseptic, cotton-tipped applicators, scissors, tweezers, etc.); antihistamines (anti-allergics) and mild steroid cream for mosquito bites; charcoal tablets, loperamide, and rehydration salts (antidiarrheal medication, best for travellers' diarrhea); acetaminophen, ibuprofen or aspirin (medicine for pain or fever); and cough suppressant or expectorant

Mosquito-borne diseases

Mosquito-borne diseases such as Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever (DHF), Malaria, Zika, and Chikungunya should be kept in mind when travelling to the Asian region. They usually manifest as sudden headaches, nausea, fever, and acute pains in the joints. Depending on your destination and how long you are travelling (as these diseases are more endemic in the jungle and rural areas, especially of Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos), specific vaccines and medications may be recommended for prevention of some of these conditions. It's important to speak to your doctors at least a month before you travel. Japanese encephalitis is another prevalent disease in Asia that spreads through mosquito bites. Its symptoms usually take 4-14 days to develop and include general symptoms such as fever, headache, and vomiting, and some specific ones like difficulty moving, confusion, swelling around the brain and coma.

JE and Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever are serious diseases that may cause death. Remember that Japanese encephalitis and Malaria mosquitoes bite mainly from dusk to dawn while Dengue, chikungunya, yellow fever and Zika mosquitoes bite mainly from dawn to dusk.

Your best option to stay healthy is avoid being bitten by

mosquitoes. You are advised to:

- Be aware of peak exposure places and times
- Wear appropriate clothing (long-sleeved shirts, long pants, boots, and hats)
- Sleep in mosquito nets
- Use mosquito repellents and apply anti-mosquito lotions and creams

Remember that you need to continue taking medication (especially in case of malaria) for a period of time after leaving an endemic zone.

Nowadays there are many sensitive tests that we are able to request to detect a lot of mosquito borne disease and other infectious disease which you may have been exposed to, therefore you should seek medical advice should you become ill to ensure you receive prompt treatment. In addition I always advise my patients who fly to bring alcohol wipes when travelling to disinfect tray tables and the entertainment screens while flying to ensure they arrive at their destination healthy.

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Save the Date

Lunchtime Social, AGM and Elections of the AWA Executive Board for 2018/2019

DATE: April 18, 2018

TIME: 12:00 PM - 1:30 PM

12:00 - 1pm, Social hour - pizza & wine will be served

1:00-1:30pm, Annual General Meeting and elections

LOCATION: AWA office

Sign up on the AWA website from 1 March 2018, free to attend