



The Information Exchange

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HIV and Travelling Abroad

Health precautions

Your doctor will know if there are any special vaccinations you may need and which ones are safe for you to receive, taking into account your HIV status. Some countries insist that you have a Yellow Fever vaccination certificate if you have previously travelled to an infected area so please speak to your doctor about this or go to a reputable travel clinic. Once at your destination there are a few sensible health precautions you can take to minimise the risk of becoming ill. Food and drink can sometimes be a source of infection abroad, most often in developing countries, and if you are in any doubt then follow these simple measures. Only drink water that has been boiled, bottled water, and avoid ice unless you are sure it has been made with boiled water. The same also applies to milk and ice cream. Food bought from street vendors should be avoided, as should raw seafood and other raw foods (except fruit and vegetables which you have peeled yourself) and salads. Don't forget that some drugs can increase your sensitivity to the sun, such as Septrin, so we recommend you use a high factor sunblock.

Medication

Make sure that you have enough of your regular medication to last you through your holiday. It is advisable to have a few extra days of medication in the event of travel delays. Bags can go missing when travelling so it is advisable to carry your medication in your hand luggage. Always carry the drugs in their original packaging to minimise custom issues and it is advisable to get a copy of your prescription and/or a letter from your doctor confirming that you have been prescribed the drugs, and they are essential for your well being. Another option for you to consider is sending your medication ahead of travel. It is important to check that it has arrived at your destination before you leave and it has not been temperature abused en route.

When travelling abroad be aware of the time differences and how you are going to manage taking your medication. If the time difference is not significant and you are going for a short period you may wish to continue taking your medication at UK time. If you would like to adjust the time you take medication to fit in with a new routine, then please speak to your doctor or pharmacy for advice. Pharmacy can also advise on any necessary vaccinations and any interaction they may have with your treatment.

Another factor to consider when travelling or going abroad with your anti-HIV medication is whether or not any of them need to be stored in a refrigerator. Please discuss this with pharmacy as they will be able to give specific handling advice. If you have to travel with needles and syringes be aware that you may be stopped at customs and asked about them. It is also a good idea to take your

familiar brand every-day preventative medications for things like headaches, insect bites and diarrhoea, etc., to avoid a possible adverse reaction to any unfamiliar analgesics.

What if I become ill on holiday?

Assuming that you will have the appropriate travel insurance, the choice you will have to make will be whether or not you wish to be treated there or return home. The extent of your illness will obviously influence your decision as will the availability of the treatment that you require.

Travel insurance

This is essential when travelling to all parts of the world, but is especially true when you are HIV. There are special arrangements for treatment within the European Union, but you must have completed an E111 form, which you can get from your local post office. This is then sent off and after several weeks you will receive an E111 card posted to your home address. Even then, you may be asked to pay for some of your treatment which is why travel insurance is still advisable from a health perspective.

Most travel insurance companies will not cover you for an HIV related illness or for the cancellation of a holiday due to an HIV related illness.

The following is a list of some companies that do cover HIV. Shop around and get a quote. An annual premium may be the most cost effective for you.

Rothwell and Towler - 01404 41234
Easy Travel Insurance – 0845 222 2226
World First Travel - 08459080161

Freedom Travel Insurance – 0870 774 3760
Free Spirit – 023 9241 9080

VISA'S

If you are a British citizen and you are travelling within the European Community, you will not need a visa. If however, you are travelling further afield or do not hold a British Passport you should check with the respective countries, embassy/high commission website. A few countries require you to produce the result of an HIV antibody test before they will issue a visa. A small number of countries also retain the right to refuse entry to travellers who are HIV positive. To get an up to date list check www.namlife.org and click "travel" and the click "countries and their entry restrictions".

NB. Restrictions no longer apply to the USA from 1st January 2010 for short term stays (30 days).

You are advised to contact the country's tourist office or embassy/high commission to check on the latest visa requirements.

Sex

If you plan to have sex while you are on holiday then take your own supply of condoms, femidoms, lubricant and or spermicide. Not all countries provide as easy access to them as the UK and quality standards may not be as high. In other EC countries check that the condoms have the EC mark.

MAKE SURE THE FOOTER REFLECTS THE SOURCE OF THE FACTSHEET, E.G. PHARMACY, NAM ETC

This information was provided by NAM Publications and produced by the Information Exchange of the HIV/GU Medicine Directorate of the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital. For more information please call 020 3315 5929.

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