

Stay healthy on holiday

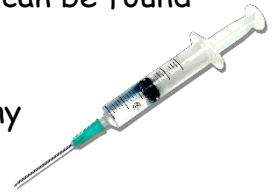
As the summer holidays approach, you might be thinking about travelling abroad to spend a couple of weeks soaking up the sun or exploring somewhere new. However, the last thing you want is to spoil your holiday by getting sick. Staying healthy abroad doesn't have to be difficult, just a few simple tips could help you stay healthy while travelling.



Check if you need vaccinations

If you're travelling abroad in a country where serious infectious diseases are found, it's vital to get vaccinated before you travel. Helpful advice can be found at [NaTHNaC - Home \(travelhealthpro.org.uk\)](http://NaTHNaC - Home (travelhealthpro.org.uk))

Leave plenty of time before you travel to ensure you can receive any recommended vaccinations.



Make sure you've got any prescription medicine you may need

Take enough to cover your whole trip, and a little bit extra in case your flight is delayed, and you need to stay abroad a bit longer. It may be a good idea to take a copy of your prescription with you, as you might need it as you go through customs or airport security.



It's also useful to pack a small first-aid kit containing items such as bandages and plasters, anti-diarrhoea tablets and rehydration salts, and painkillers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen. Hopefully, you won't need them, but they'll be on hand just in case.

Note any emergency phone numbers

You never want to go on holiday and spend it in the hospital, but it's worth knowing who to call if you, a loved one, or a travel companion gets sick.



Wash your hands often

We all know it's important to wash our hands to reduce the spread of germs. But when you're travelling abroad, it becomes even more vital as you'll come into contact with germs and bacteria that your body may have never encountered before.



How to stay hydrated

The heat makes you sweat, which cools you down. However, that also means you're constantly losing fluid. Approximately 60% of your body is made up of water so it's important to make sure you're replenishing your losses, especially with increased sweating in the summer. Other indicators of dehydration include fatigue; dizziness; light-headedness; dry mouth and/or lips; and infrequent urination, typically fewer than four times a day.

Here's some tips on how to stay hydrated:



Sip water throughout the day

Don't wait until you're thirsty! Drink water throughout the day to prevent dehydration or over exhaustion. Though we've all heard the eight-glasses-a-day recommendation, hydration needs vary from person to person and change depending on heat, humidity and activity levels. Use the colour of your urine to guide whether you're hydrated enough — the clearer, the better.

Avoid alcohol

Alcohol is dehydrating, so it's important to have at least one glass of water for every alcoholic beverage consumed. Like alcohol, caffeine also has a reputation for being dehydrating. However, caffeine should be fine to consume in moderate amounts, even in the heat.



Hydrating foods

Water isn't the only thing that contributes to overall hydration. Foods with high water content and other beverages count, too. Hydrating foods include watermelon and other melons, tomatoes, cucumber, strawberries, celery and lettuce. Juices and ice lollies can replenish fluids as well, but as these choices tend to be high in sugar, they are best consumed in moderation.



Make water interesting

Some people find plain water boring, which makes drinking enough of it to stay hydrated feel like a chore, make it more interesting by flavouring water with fresh fruit — lemon, mint and strawberry are a few options. Keep a refillable water bottle on hand at all times, as it's easier to stay hydrated if you're prepared.



Slip, Slop, Slap, Seek, Slide

Slip on some clothing

Clothing should always be your first line of defence against damage from the sun. Cover as much of the skin as is possible, paying special attention to the shoulders which burn easily. Consider t-shirts and hats even when in the water, especially for children and those who burn easily.



Slop on the sun cream

No sunscreen provides absolute protection, so it should be used with the other lines of defence, and not alone. Generously apply sunscreen with SPF30 or more to all areas of skin exposed to the sun. A waterproof sunscreen is better, even if you are not swimming, as it protects you better if you sweat. Apply the sunscreen 20-30 minutes before going outside, and at least every 2 hours. If you swim or sweat a lot, use it more often. Remember using a towel or lying back on a fabric sunbed can rub the sunscreen off.



Slap on a hat

A hat with a wide brim is best, as it will shade the head, face, ears and neck. Baseball caps do not shade the ears or neck, and so are not as effective.



Seek some shade

Keeping cool in the shade is a good way of protecting yourself from the sun, especially if you are very fair skinned. Just a few minutes of strong sunshine is all it takes to burn pale skin. Find some shade whenever possible, but especially in the middle of the day, between 11am and 3pm, when the sun is at its strongest. Always keep babies and toddlers in the shade if you can.



Slide on sunglasses

UV radiation can also damage the eyes, and so sunglasses with good quality lenses that filter out the UV are essential. Always look for a CE, UV 400 or British Standard Mark. Styles that wrap around, and so do not allow sun in at the sides are better.



Water safety advice

Being by water is a great place to spend time with friends, but it's important you know how to keep yourself, and your friends, safe. There were 277 accidental drownings in the UK in 2021. 62% of these happened at inland waters and 83% of these were male. These are scary statistics.

We want to help you feel confident in making safe choices around water throughout the year, so that this doesn't happen to you or your friends. Water may look safe, especially a familiar stretch of water local to you, but poor decisions around it can create a dangerous situation.



Being aware of everyday risks in, on and around water and knowing how to behave could save your life. There are no lifeguards along canals and rivers to help you. Also, if you're on a secluded part of the water, it will take the emergency services much longer to reach you.

- Do you know how deep the water is? It may be quite shallow, and you could easily hit the bottom if you jump from a height.
- Do you know what is in the water? Landing on something that is in the water could really hurt you. Consider that there are diseases and reeds, and also plant life that can tangle around your limbs, possibly dragging you down.

Cold water shock - the stats

Low water temperatures cause the body to go into 'cold water shock'. It reacts to the cold water by drawing the blood away from muscles to protect the organs and making it difficult to move limbs.

The cold water will make you gasp uncontrollably and breathe in water. Your heart will beat really fast, you'll lose energy quickly, and eventually your muscles will become paralysed.



Float to live

Instead, float on your back to keep your airways clear, control your breathing and allow the cold water shock to pass. Then you can call out for help or even swim to safety.



Wildfire safety advice

Wildfires are a serious problem in Lancashire. The Fire Service deal with more and more fires on moorland and grassland each year, with many sadly being caused by the actions of people. Climate change is also a factor because it means some areas are drier and more likely to set alight.



However, there are many ways you can help to avoid wildfires starting.

- Never use disposable barbecues on moorland or grassland. Pack a picnic instead.



- Avoid smoking on moorland. If you do, always extinguish your cigarettes and other smoking materials thoroughly. Do not dispose of cigarette butts out of car windows.



- Never leave bottles behind, as sunlight can become focused as it shines through glass, starting fires.



- Keep children away from lighters and matches.

If you see a wildfire, always report it on 999. Don't assume someone already has.

By following this advice, you can enjoy visiting Lancashire's beautiful moorland without risking causing a costly and potentially deadly wildfire.



For further information and support on health protection practice, please do not hesitate to contact the Lancashire County Council Health Protection Team at the following mailbox address: healthprotection@lancashire.gov.uk

Sources: Adapted from various public health protection and safety materials, contact list available.

