

Traveling overseas? Follow this health checklist

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As summer approaches, you may be planning a big trip for the first time

since the pandemic began—but be sure to make and follow a health checklist if you are traveling to another country, an expert advises.

That includes going to a [travel medicine clinic](#), getting all the necessary vaccinations and packing the right medications.

"It's important to secure the proper vaccinations for your entire itinerary and discuss any potential risk factors with a travel clinic doctor," said Dr. Andrew Walker, a travel medicine physician at Penn State Health Travel Medicine at Penn State Health Urgent Care.

A travel medicine physician is an expert on [health risks](#) and vaccination requirements for countries worldwide. It's suggested to find one with plenty of personal travel experience.

"The personal experience of a travel medicine physician is important," Walker said in a Penn State news release. "It's not something that can be learned from books."

Try to find a doctor with experience with activities you may be doing—for example, [scuba diving](#), high-altitude mountaineering or ice climbing—to give you practical advice and help you manage risks.

A travel medicine doctor will provide personalized recommendations for you based on your trip and your health. You'll need to provide an exact itinerary and details on underlying medical conditions.

Vaccinations are crucial because overseas travel may increase your risk of exposure to infections such as hepatitis A, hepatitis B and tetanus, along with diseases like measles, mumps and rubella and polio. Make sure you get your [flu vaccine](#) and that you are up to date with your COVID-19 [vaccine](#) and [booster shots](#), Walker said.

Depending on your destination(s), you may require more specific vaccinations.

In general, try to schedule vaccinations at least four weeks before [travel](#).

Another important point: Stock up on your current prescription drugs and certain over-the-counter (OTC) medications before you leave. In terms of OTC products, Walker strongly recommends medications for indigestion, pain drugs like Tylenol (acetaminophen) or Aleve (naproxen), antibiotic ointment, bandages for minor cuts or blisters, sunblock and insect repellent.

Depending on where you're going and what you'll be doing, you might consider [prescription medications](#) for [traveler's diarrhea](#) and sea or [altitude sickness](#), Walker suggested.

More information: You can get more travel advice at the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

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