Main Line HealthCare

Preparing for a Safe & Healthy Travel Season

by Francesca Litow, MD, MPH, FACOEM Medical Director, Occupational and Travel Health

As the weather warms up and we approach the summer travel season, many of our patients will be preparing for vacation travel. Their plans may range from travel to visit friends and relatives in the U.S. or abroad, to ecotourism adventures, or an epic journey around the world.

Travelers may plan to include rural sites in their itineraries, where they will be remote from access to healthcare. Others may pursue strenuous activities such as mountain climbing, river rafting, or scuba diving. Many will sample new cuisine and will stay in new environments including extreme altitude and temperature. For all destinations, preparation is essential to reduce risk of preventable illnesses and injuries.

Primary care providers have an important role in supporting their patients' health, including ensuring that routine immunizations such as tetanus shots are up to date, and that patients with chronic diseases are aware of disease-specific health risks related to travel to high altitude and heat or cold stress. Special attention should be paid to travelers who are undergoing treatment for cancer, those on steroids, those at extremes of age, transplant patients, and pregnant women.

Travelers should consult a travel clinic 4-6 weeks prior to travel to obtain destination-specific education and medical advice regarding required and recommended vaccinations, protection against food and water borne diseases, anti-malarial prophylaxis (if indicated), prevention of altitude-related illness, and travel-related safety education. The Occupational and Travel Health services at Paoli and Collegeville offer comprehensive travel consultation.

Contact 610-648-1293 for more information.