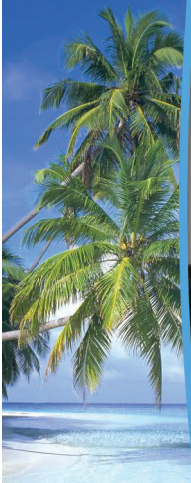




Kingdom of Bahrain
Ministry of Health



HEALTH GUIDE FOR TRAVELERS





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The Prime Minister



H.M. King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa
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The Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme
Commander of the Bahrain Defence Force





**Health Guide
for Travelers**

Introduction:

In the current era of globalization and advancement in mode of travel combined with wealth, individuals are traveling to various areas of the world, and are exposed to different safety and health risks.

Certain diseases such as malaria, yellow fever and dengue fever are not present in Bahrain; however they are common in some areas of the world. Moreover, enormous increase in the number of travelers and the speed of travel facilitates the spread of infectious diseases from one country to another even prior to noticing the presence of the illness.

Travelers might engage in several activities that place them at different risks. Patterns of food consumption, tobacco use and other risky behaviors might be of concern.

Traveler should be aware of the risks, dangers and how to stay safe and healthy. This might be achieved through planning travel in advance, taking the necessary protection and preventive measures, taking precautions during travel and following health advices after return home.

Travel health is of great significance to any traveler.

Accordingly it is highly recommended to take the opportunity of the availability of accessible health centers to seek advice about your destination risks and to take the necessary vaccination and the prophylactic medications.

The purpose of this booklet is to advocate for improved health and safety for travelers.



Planning your travel

- Consult your family physician 6 weeks prior to travel or as soon as possible to check destination risks, recommended vaccinations, malaria medicine and other preventive measures.
- If you have an existing medical condition, you might require more preparations.
- Inform your doctor if you are pregnant or taking hormonal medication such as oral contraceptive pills or have recently had surgery especially if long journey is planned.
- Carry medications that is prescribed by your physician or for self treatment in their original containers.
- Check the climate of your destination.
- Carry a copy of your prescriptions or doctor report.
- Ensure your medication is legal in the country you are visiting.
- Make travel insurance to avoid medical expenses that might be huge if you became sick during your trip.

- Make sure you got correct visas for your destination and a valid passport. Certain countries need valid passport for at least 6 months after the date you travel.
- If you are driving abroad, make sure you have a valid license and have information about the driving laws in the country you are visiting.

Things you might need to bring if recommended by physician based on destination risks:

1. To minimize sun burn and harmful effects of UV sun rays:

- Sun block (preferably SPF 15 or greater), sunglasses, and a hat or scarf.
- Soothing cream

2. To minimize illnesses carried by insects:

- Long-sleeved shirts, long trousers, and a hat or scarf to wear while outside.
- DEET containing insect repellent.
- Permethrin or another insecticide chemically treated bed nets.
- Permethrin or, deltamethrin, to treat bed nets and clothes.

- Insect spray for the rooms, preferably pyrethroid insecticide for flying mosquito.



3. Medical kit recommended by physician:

- Thermometer
- Chronic disease identification card if applicable and copies of prescriptions.
- Medications that is recommended for existing medical condition.
- Over the counter medication such as Anti-pyretic, simple analgesic, antihistamine, and oral rehydration solution.
- Anti-malarial medications, if recommended based on destination risks.
- Anti-motion sickness medication.
- Basic first-aid items (adhesive bandages, gauze, antiseptic solution..etc)
- Antibacterial hand wipes or hand sanitizer

Considerations for certain infections and their recommended vaccines:

Yellow fever:

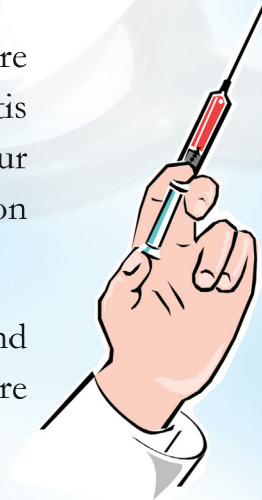
- There are areas where there is a potential risk of yellow fever infection due to the presence of mosquito that transmit the infection and animal reservoirs (some African and Latin American countries).
- Some countries require an international certificate of vaccination against yellow fever from travelers arriving from or travelling to these areas.
- For the vaccine to be effective it should be taken at least 10 days before travel.
- This vaccine can be repeated after ten years if required.
- Sheikh Sabah Al Salem Health Center at Um Al Hassam is the center designated to give yellow fever vaccine in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Typhoid Fever:

- There are areas where there is a potential risk of typhoid fever infection, consult with your physician about your destination risks.
- The development of the disease is due to ingestion or drinking contaminated food or fluids with the bacteria causing the infection.
- Vaccine might produce protection one to two weeks after the injection.
- This vaccine can be repeated after three years if indicated.
- The vaccine is available at all Health Centers.

Hepatitis A:

- There are areas where there is a potential risk of hepatitis A infection, consult with your physician about your destination risks.
- Hepatitis A Vaccine is safe and highly effective if two doses are received.



- Hepatitis A vaccine first dose recommended to be given as soon as travel is planned, while second dose to be given not less than six month after the first dose for long term protection.
- The vaccine is available at all Health Centers.

Meningococcal Meningitis:

- There are areas where there is a potential risk of meningococcal infection, consult with your physician about your destination risks.
- Meningococcal disease is an acute bacterial infection characterized by sudden onset fever, headache, vomiting, and neck stiffness.
- Meningococcal vaccine is required for Hajj pilgrims, and recommended to travelers to meningitis belt area (certain African countries) and other countries with potential risk.
- Meningococcal polysaccharide vaccine can be repeated after three years if indicated.
- The vaccine is available at all Health Centers.

Malaria:

- Malaria is a common disease in many countries that are visited annually by large number of international travelers.
- The risk for travelers of contracting malaria is highly variable from country to country and even between areas in a country.
- Recommended malaria prevention medication for adult (>45 kg) travelers is Mefloquine 250mg once weekly starting at least one week and up to 2 - 3 weeks before travel to malaria zone and to be continued once weekly during the travel and for 4 weeks after return. The dose for children (<45 kg) is according to weight. Consult your physician to check if it is suitable for you and to enquire about side effect, other malaria prevention medication might be used.
- Consult a physician for more information about this medicine and to ensure that you don't have any contraindication
- No anti-malaria medication is 100% effective in preventing the infection, therefore other measures to minimize insect bites should be considered.

These measures include:

- Sleep in a room that is screened against mosquitoes and use a mosquito net over the bed (preferably treated with insect repellent).
- Use insect repellents ointments, lotions and sprays.
- Cover arms and legs with light-colored, long-sleeved clothes and trousers and use an insect repellent especially in the evening.
- Consult a physician, if any malaria symptoms developed (fever, chills, headache and sweating)
- All Health Centers physicians can write the prescription for travelers.

Staying Healthy During Your Travel

- Check if it is safe to drink tap water if not, drink only boiled or bottled water and avoid ice made from unknown water source.
- Avoid salads, non-peeling fruit, unpasteurized milk and dairy products. Also avoid improperly cooked food.
- Drink a lot of water and juices in hot climates to avoid dehydration.

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use hand rub or antiseptic gel to prevent transmission of infection.
- Continue to take your malaria prevention medication during your trip as recommended by the physician.
- Take your regular medication.
- Keep feet clean and dry. Wear comfortable shoes and do not walk barefoot.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts, long trousers, and scarf or hats when outdoors and use insect repellents to decrease mosquito insect bites.
- Sleep under insecticide-treated bed nets, if needed.
- Avoid swimming in fresh water such as lakes and fast flowing rivers that might be the source of certain infection in some areas.
- Do not handle animals such as monkeys, cats and dogs, in particular those of unknown health status and stay away from places where live poultry is raised or kept to avoid diseases transmission.
- Avoid sharing needles for injections, body piercing

or tattoos to prevent infections.

- If you feel unwell consult a physician.
- Motor vehicle accidents are among the leading causes of travelers injuries. If you are driving abroad you should:
 - Wear the safety belt.
 - Place children in age-appropriate restraints in the back seat.
 - Follow the driving laws of the country.
 - Use helmets on bikes, and motorcycles.

After Returning Home

- Continue taking malaria prevention medication drug for the duration recommended by physician (4 weeks for mefloquine) if you are returning from a malaria-risk area.
- If you develop fever or flu-like illness, seek medical advice and tell the physician your travel history.



Five keys to safer food



Keep clean

- ✓ Wash your hands before handling food and often during food preparation
- ✓ Wash your hands after going to the toilet
- ✓ Wash and sanitize all surfaces and equipment used for food preparation
- ✓ Protect kitchen areas and food from insects, pests and other animals

Why?

While most microorganisms do not cause disease, dangerous microorganisms are widely found in soil, water, animals and people. These microorganisms are carried on hands, wiping cloths and utensils, especially cutting boards and the slightest contact can transfer them to food and cause foodborne diseases.

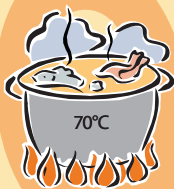


Separate raw and cooked

- ✓ Separate raw meat, poultry and seafood from other foods
- ✓ Use separate equipment and utensils such as knives and cutting boards for handling raw foods
- ✓ Store food in containers to avoid contact between raw and prepared foods

Why?

Raw food, especially meat, poultry and seafood, and their juices, can contain dangerous microorganisms which may be transferred onto other foods during food preparation and storage.

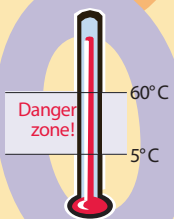


Cook thoroughly

- ✓ Cook food thoroughly, especially meat, poultry, eggs and seafood
- ✓ Bring foods like soups and stews to boiling to make sure that they have reached 70°C. For meat and poultry, make sure that juices are clear, not pink. Ideally, use a thermometer
- ✓ Reheat cooked food thoroughly

Why?

Proper cooking kills almost all dangerous microorganisms. Studies have shown that cooking food to a temperature of 70°C can help ensure it is safe for consumption. Foods that require special attention include minced meats, rolled roasts, large joints of meat and whole poultry.



Keep food at safe temperatures

- ✓ Do not leave cooked food at room temperature for more than 2 hours
- ✓ Refrigerate promptly all cooked and perishable food (preferably below 5°C)
- ✓ Keep cooked food piping hot (more than 60°C) prior to serving
- ✓ Do not store food too long even in the refrigerator
- ✓ Do not thaw frozen food at room temperature

Why?

Microorganisms can multiply very quickly if food is stored at room temperature. By holding at temperatures below 5°C or above 60°C, the growth of microorganisms is slowed down or stopped. Some dangerous microorganisms still grow below 5°C.



Use safe water and raw materials

- ✓ Use safe water or treat it to make it safe
- ✓ Select fresh and whole some foods
- ✓ Choose foods processed for safety, such as pasteurized milk
- ✓ Wash fruits and vegetables, especially if eaten raw
- ✓ Do not use food beyond its expiry date

Why?

Raw materials, including water and ice, may be contaminated with dangerous microorganisms and chemicals. Toxic chemicals may be formed in damaged and mouldy foods. Care in selection of raw materials and simple measures such as washing and peeling may reduce the risk.