

# Health Tips

Prepare for your physical and mental health before, during, and after your program, including consulting with your primary care provider or the **Lafene Health Center (LHC) Travel Clinic**.

## Lafene Health Center (LHC) Travel Clinic

- To schedule an appointment at the LHC Travel Clinic, call (785) 532-6544.
- Clinic is located at Kansas State University, 1105 Sunset Avenue, Manhattan, KS 66502.
- There is no charge for consultation appointments, but charges do apply for medications purchased through the LHC Pharmacy, immunizations, and physical exams.
- For more information, visit: <http://www.k-state.edu/lafene/travel.html>

## Know Before You Go

- **Confirm whether your immunizations are up to date.** Students should ideally consult their personal physician, a Kansas health department, or the LHC Travel Clinic **two to four months prior to departure** in case a series of shots is required.
- **Familiarize yourself with region-specific health issues in the host country.** Notices and warnings of region-specific health issues are posted on the U.S. Center for Disease Control & Prevention website (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel>). The LHC Travel Clinic also offers such information. Conditions such as traveler's diarrhea are especially common in less-developed regions, for example.
- **Medical treatment varies throughout the world** due to differences in culture, medical training, supplies, and facilities. Take time to research medical treatment in your host country.

## First Aid Kit

Students should carry a small first aid kit appropriate for the destination and length of stay. The most common health problems encountered while abroad are traveler's diarrhea, upper respiratory infections, and skin conditions, so pack accordingly. We suggest that your first aid kit include:

- **Pain medicines** such as aspirin, acetaminophen, naproxen, and ibuprofen
- **Hand wipes and hand sanitizers**
- **Motion sickness medicine** like dimenhydrinate and an anti-nausea drug like promethazine (prescription only). Acetazolamide (prescription only) may help prevent altitude sickness
- **Anti-diarrheals** such as loperamide (Imodium) or bismuth subsalicylate (Pepto-Bismol)
- **Antibiotic ointment, adhesive bandages, hydrocortisone cream, moleskin** for blisters, **sunscreen** with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30 and **lip balm** with SPF
- **Decongestants** and **antihistamines** for allergies (consider non-drowsy versions)
- **Cough and cold medicine**
- **Tissues** to double as toilet paper as necessary (some countries don't stock public bathrooms)

## Prescriptions and Medications

- **Fill prescriptions prior to departure, and take enough to last the entire time abroad.**
- **Transport all medications in their original, labeled containers** along with documentation of the prescription to avoid problems in Customs.
- **Prescription medications are not always the same abroad as in the U.S.** If possible, plan not to have U.S. prescriptions filled abroad. If carrying a prescription, be sure it is up-to-date

and ask the physician to write the generic name, instructions, dosage, and reason for the prescription.

- **Check with your primary care provider** prior to departure for advice on how to adjust taking prescription medications while traveling in order to reduce the risk of overdosing or underdosing (due to changes in multiple time zones).
- **Check with the foreign embassy of the country you are visiting** to make sure that none of the prescription medications you use are considered illegal narcotics in that country.
- **Always keep prescription medications in your carry-on bag** while in transit. Once at your destination, keep some medication with you and keep the remainder in a secure location at your place of residence. If your bag gets lost or is stolen, you will have a backup supply.
- **If you are on prescription birth control, carefully follow the instructions above.** Many types of hormonal birth controls can be affected by travel (particularly when crossing multiple time zones). Please consult with your physician **well in advance** (ideally, several months) of your travel abroad regarding how you might be affected, ways to minimize those effects, and other options, such as a Long Acting Reversible Contraceptive (LARC) like the Implant or an IUD.
- **Participants who wear glasses and/or contact lenses are advised to take along an extra pair of contacts and glasses and their lens prescriptions.** Contact wearers should also bring plenty of solution in case their preferred brand is difficult to find or unavailable.

## Jet Lag

Jet lag is basically a sleep disturbance caused by traveling through different time zones. The most common symptoms include fatigue, irritability, and disorientation. Some ways to limit effects are:

- **Get a good night's sleep** the first night after you arrive. Eat a high carbohydrate meal or snack before bedtime, exercise, or take a hot bath.
- **Get up early** the first morning and at the same time every morning thereafter.
- Always try to **get to sleep at your usual time** (e.g. 11 p.m.) at your new destination.
- **Avoid naps** until you are fully adjusted to your new time zone.
- **Modify your diet** until you have adjusted: avoid caffeine and alcohol, eat high-protein breakfasts and lunches, and eat high carbohydrate dinners.

## While Abroad

- **Always check that water is safe to drink before drinking it** and aware that this can affect you regardless of your destination.
- **Be cautious until your stomach has adjusted** to the new food you are consuming.
- **Insect bites not only cause discomfort but also may spread infectious diseases such as malaria.** To minimize exposure in countries where infectious diseases are transmitted by mosquitoes, students are advised to:
  - Stay in well-screened areas and sleep under **mosquito netting**.
  - **Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants.**
  - **Use insect repellent** containing **33% or more DEET** (N-N diethyl-m-toulamide).
  - **Avoid using perfumes, scented soap, and aftershave lotion.**
- **STIs like Chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, herpes, and HIV pose risks in every country.** As in the US, always use condoms if you engage in sexual activities in order to prevent pregnancy and STIs.
- **If a health emergency arises, contact local authorities first, then inform UnitedHealthcare Global, your insurance provider.** For more information, see the **Emergency Contacts** sheet.