



HOLIDAY HEALTH TIPS

The Christmas holidays are upon us and as usual, many Kenyans are preparing to travel upcountry or to the coastal and other regions for a holiday.

Here are some important tips for you and your family as you travel.

Wash your hands often:

Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps you can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. Many diarrhoeal diseases can be prevented by proper washing of hands. Wash your hands with soap and clean running water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and clean water are not available, use an alcohol-based product.

FOOD: Eat only well cooked food, and eat in clean establishments. Avoid salads, kachumbaris and other uncooked foods unless you are absolutely sure that they have been hygienically prepared.

Traveller's diarrhoea is the most common travel-related ailment. The cornerstone of prevention is *food and water precautions*. All travellers should bring along an antidiarrheal drug to be started promptly if significant diarrhoea occurs, defined as three or more loose stools in an 8-hour period or five or more loose stools in a 24-hour period, especially if associated with nausea, vomiting, cramps, fever or blood in the stool.

Most cases of travellers' diarrhoea are mild and do not require either antibiotics or antidiarrheal drugs. *Adequate fluid intake* is essential.

If diarrhoea is severe or bloody, or if fever occurs with shaking chills, or if abdominal pain becomes marked, or if diarrhoea persists for more than 72 hours, medical attention should be sought.

Though effective, antibiotics are not recommended prophylactically (i.e. to prevent diarrhea before it occurs) because of the risk of adverse effects, though this approach may be warranted in special situations, such as immunocompromised travellers.

Stay warm.

Cold temperatures can cause serious health problems, especially in infants and older adults. Those who are travelling to the highlands-Limuru, Nandi and so on should try to stay dry, and dress warmly in several layers of loose-fitting, tightly woven clothing. This is especially important in asthmatics.

Get check-ups and vaccinations.

Exams and screenings can help find problems before they start. They can also help find problems early, when the chances for treatment and cure are better. For example parents with children who are asthmatic, epileptic or prone to allergies should have the kids checked up. Schedule a visit with your health care provider for a yearly exam. Ask what vaccinations and tests you should get based on your age, lifestyle, travel plans, medical history, and family health history.

Remember to take your medications.

Holidays often disrupt routines and may cause you to forget your life-saving medications. (Medicines for high blood pressure, Diabetes, high cholesterol, asthma, ARVs etc.) As you note social appointments, add a reminder to take your medications or order re-fills. If you are travelling, be sure to take enough medications with you in case of delays and have a copy of your prescriptions in case of loss. Be sure to bring a phone number for your doctor along with your Resolution Health Insurance cards, in case of emergency. Carry your medications in your carry-on luggage if you are flying

MALARIA: MALARIA ZONES:

Endemic – Areas of stable malaria have altitudes ranging from 0 to 1300 meters around Lake Victoria in western Kenya and in the coastal regions. Rainfall, temperature and humidity are the determinants of the perennial transmission of malaria. Transmission is intense throughout the year.

Seasonal malaria transmission- this epidemiological zone in arid and semi-arid areas of northern and south-eastern parts of the country experiences short periods of intense malaria transmission during the rainfall seasons. Temperatures are usually high and water pools created during the rainy season provide the malaria vectors breeding sites

Malaria epidemic prone areas of western highlands of Kenya - Malaria transmission in the western highlands of Kenya is seasonal, with considerable year-to-year variation.

Low risk malaria areas – this zone covers the central highlands of Kenya including Nairobi. The temperatures are usually too low to allow breeding of mosquitoes.

PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE!

If you are travelling to a Malaria zone, ensure that you and your children:

1. SLEEP UNDER A TREATED NET.
2. USE MOSQUITO REPELLANT SPRAY OR PETROLEUM JELLY TO REPEL MOSQUITOES.
3. CLEAR HOMESTEAD OF BUSHES, STAGNANT POOLS.
4. USE MOSQUITO SPRAY TO SPRAY ROOMS BEFORE SLEEPING.

PROPHYLAXIS: MALARIA PREVENTION BY USE OF MEDICINES:

Remember to tell your pharmacist:

- If you are pregnant, planning a pregnancy or breastfeeding
- If you suffer from any diseases or conditions
- If a child UNDER 5 YR is travelling with you.

This information will help the pharmacist recommend the most appropriate regimen for you.

Remember to leave yourself enough time before you leave to obtain your medicines. All the malaria prevention medicines must be started before you travel. Mefloquine needs to be started two-and-a-half weeks before travel, chloroquine and proguanil should be started a week before, and Malarone and doxycycline one to two days before travelling.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM RESOLUTION HEALTH!

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