

## Health Care Steps Before Bon Voyage

Vacation season is upon us, but without the right precautions, an overseas journey could come with health risks, depending on where your travels take you. OSF HealthCare now has an option for travelers who want peace of mind before they hit the road.

“Being able to travel with peace of mind means you’ve done everything that you possibly can to minimize risk while you’re traveling, and I think that allows for people to have maybe a more stress-free travel experience, being able to just truly go and enjoy what they’re seeing, what they’re doing, and really take it all in,” said Crystal Sweeney, APN, FNP-BC, OSF HealthCare Medical Group.

Each week Sweeney eases the minds of world travelers at the Travel Health Clinic at OSF HealthCare Medical Group – College Avenue in Bloomington, IL.

Sweeney and the team there provide pre-trip care, including travel consultations, education and immunizations for participants before they embark on a trip outside of the U.S.

The *New England Journal of Medicine* reports that up to 64% of people report some illness during international travel. While most of these illnesses are mild, such as diarrhea, respiratory infections or skin disorders, some travelers return home with preventable life-threatening infections.

“Top illnesses when people travel, that they can come into contact with are things like hepatitis A and typhoid, that are found in contaminated food and water sources, malaria is something that is transmitted by mosquitos, and so different countries have high incidences of contracting malaria while you’re there, there are some places that also have risk of yellow fever,” warned Sweeney.

At the OSF HealthCare Travel Health Clinic, tourists will get a health plan tailored to their particular itinerary. They can be immunized, and will be provided with educational material on food and water safety, find out what to pack in a traveler kit and how to prevent traveler’s diarrhea.

Sweeney will go over real-time risk assessments from the Centers for Disease Control about the region a participant is visiting. She is also a member of the International Society of Travel Medicine, which puts her in a unique position to have the most up-to-date information on any destination.

“What’s really nice about being a part of the International Society of Travel Medicine is I’m part of a list serve,” said Sweeney. She continued, “So if there is someone traveling to a country that for whatever reason I am unclear on maybe what’s prevalent in that area at that time, I can reach out on this list serve to a health care professional in travel medicine, but particularly in that country who can then give me some guidance on what their risk might be.”

If you are traveling internationally, Sweeney recommends meeting with a health care provider four to six weeks before your trip.

Sweeney is available for consultations from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm on Tuesdays, and a registered nurse is available 8:00 am to 4:00 pm Monday-Friday to answer questions, book consultation appointments and provide vaccinations that may be part of a series.

For more information or to schedule a travel health consultation at the Travel Health Clinic at OSF HealthCare Medical Group – College Avenue in Bloomington, call (309) 664-3201.