

Planes, trains, automobiles...and your health (part one)

Here's how to keep your health in mind ahead of summer vacations, whether across town or across the world

Summer means getaways to de-stress and make memories. But the last thing you want is to catch a cold or worse, especially if you're halfway across the world where health care resources might be different or scarce.

It's not too late to make some quick preparations, says [Jennifer Whitfill, APRN](#), a family nurse practitioner at OSF HealthCare.

- Stop by the doctor's office: Whitfill says if you haven't seen your primary care provider for a physical exam in a while, make an appointment before vacation to address any lingering health issues. This could include getting vaccines depending on your health and where you're going. Whitfill says typhoid fever (seen in southern Africa, Asia, Central America and South America), yellow fever (Africa), hepatitis A (remote or underdeveloped areas) and rabies are ailments to protect yourself against.
- Stock up on over-the-counter medication.

"It's important to be prepared," for when these medications are needed, Whitfill says. "Consider packing Tylenol or ibuprofen, anti-allergy medicines like Claritin, Zyrtec and Benadryl. Dramamine is a good one for motion sickness or nausea. Some people reach out to their provider if they're going on a cruise. There's a prescription called a scopolamine patch that you can put behind your ear. It's good for three days and helps offset motion sickness.

"Eyedrops are good if you have seasonal allergies. Over-the-counter saline or Pataday drops," Whitfill adds. "Creams like hydrocortisone and triple antibiotic ointment are good to have."

For outdoor trips like camping, essentials including a first aid kit, sunscreen and bug spray are must-haves, too. Know if you're on a medication, such as certain acne creams and menstrual cycle medications, that makes you more prone to sunburn.

And regardless of what you pack, Whitfill says flyers should check the [Transportation Security Administration guidelines](#) about what can come on a plane. She says to leave medicines in their original packaging when preparing airport luggage.

- Medicine, part two – before you go: You might hear travel bloggers say to boost your immune health before traveling to reduce your risk of catching something. Is the advice overblown?

Whitfill says no. She says elderberry, vitamin C and D and zinc are all good supplements to take before a trip. Start three to four weeks before departure, if you can. And if you have concerns about supplements interacting with prescription medication, talk to your provider.

- Check the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website](#) for travel advisories about disease outbreaks, civil unrest and more.