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Erica’s Corner: Traveling Safely

Traveling is fun – you can meet new people and experience new cultures, but traveling may also expose you to diseases that your body may not be immune to. Therefore, when you’ve decided on your destination, talk with your healthcare provider and ask if you need to get any vaccines before you leave the country. The last thing you want is to be sick when you’re far away from home!

Here are some things to remember to bring (in addition to your passport) when you are traveling:

★ Bug spray or insect repellent: Mosquitoes can carry diseases.

★ Prescription medicine: Be sure to bring enough of any prescription medicine you take both on a regular and as needed basis (this includes asthma inhalers too). Also, keep the medicine in the original prescription bottles.

★ Over-the-counter medications that you might need, such as acetaminophen, nasal spray, and anti-diarrhea medicine.

★ Adhesive bandages and an antiseptic spray or lotion.

★ Sunscreen and after-sun lotion (if you get a sunburn).

Although these items are available at pharmacies in the US, they may not be readily available in other countries. Also, since the tap water in some countries may be contaminated, it is good practice to drink bottled water and avoid ice cubes. You might consider using bottled water to brush your teeth for the same reason. Before you go on vacation, make sure you check out the Center for Disease and Prevention’s website at www.cdc.gov. You can look up your destination to find out if you will need special immunizations. You can also check out tips on how travel safely.

If you are a victim of cyberbullying:

• Don’t bully back. This is important, because if you retaliate, you become a bully yourself. Talk to a trusted adult (a parent, guardian, guidance counselor, older sibling) instead.

• Ask for advice. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children offers advice to teens who have found themselves in a situation where they are being cyberbullied. They are available at the following website: netsmartz.org/contact/.

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Summer is finally here! It’s the best time of year to go outside with your friends and soak up some sun. Although the sun is a great source of vitamin D, it can also cause damage to your skin. In addition to wrinkles, harmful effects such as skin cancer may affect you later on in life. According to the American Cancer Society, over 60,000 Americans are diagnosed with skin cancer each year; over half of them before the age of 64.

Skin cancer can affect people of any race, ethnicity, or gender, but if you have fair skin, blonde or red hair, and light eyes, the chances are much greater. In fact, there is a 1 in 50 chance for people with a light skin tone to be diagnosed with skin cancer.

The three different types of skin cancer are:

- **Basal cell carcinoma (the most common form)**
- **Squamous cell carcinoma (the least common)**
- **Malignant melanoma (the most deadly form)**

Skin cancer can be detected early by checking your skin regularly. Be alert to changes in the number, size, shape, and color of your moles or pigmented areas. If you notice that any of your moles have changed, gotten darker, bigger, or irregular around the edges, you should make an appointment with your HCP or dermatologist.

For more information about skin cancer, you can visit the following pages online:

- [cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/skin](http://cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/skin)
- [childrenshospital.org/az/Site1603/mainpage1603P0.html](http://childrenshospital.org/az/Site1603/mainpage1603P0.html)

*Special thanks to Jeanine Maglione RN, Dermatology Nurse at Children’s Hospital Boston her help.

Here are a few important reminders:

- **Limit sun exposure** between the hours of 10am–3pm when UV rays are the strongest.
- **Always cover up** with clothing, a hat, and sunglasses that block at least 99% of UVA rays.
- **Use sunscreen** with an SPF (sun protection factor) of at least 15 or more; even on cloudy days. Apply it on any part of your skin that might be exposed to the sun, including your scalp. Remember to reapply sunscreen every 2 hours (even when the weather is overcast) and during high altitude activities such as skiing or mountain climbing. Go in the shade right away if you notice that your skin is getting pink!
- **Avoid tanning beds**: they use UV light that can damage your skin.
- **Don’t forget to check your skin regularly**, and make an appointment with your HCP or dermatologist if you notice any changes.

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