

## HOW TO STAY HEALTHY IN THE DR

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### *BEFORE YOU LEAVE*

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**Immunizations-** (Recommendations taken from CDC Website)

*Routine Vaccines:*

Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis (dTdap) OR Tdap: Every 10 years

Varicella (Chicken Pox) Or had the disease

Polio

Annual Flu Shot

Measles-mumps-rubella (MMR)

All usually completed in childhood but double check, with the exception of the flu shot.

DR Specific:

Hepatitis A: one injection and then can be boosted in 6 months to give lifetime immunity

Hepatitis B: (usually completed in childhood- 3 dose series 0, 1 month after and then 4 mos. after) – can be contracted through contact with blood, blood products, body fluid exposure.

Typhoid: comes in tablet form which is protective for 5 years, or injection which is protective for 3 years

Rabies: (Only administered if you have been exposed) Can be found in dogs, bats, and other mammals. Don't touch the animals, you won't have a risk!

### 2) Medications-

**MALARIA:** prevention is usually with Chloroquine 500mg tablet; take one tablet the week before departure, one each week that you are in the DR, and once a week for 4 weeks upon return. Avoid Doxycycline as it increases your likelihood of sunburn.

**TRAVELER'S DIARRHEA:** it is best to bring a prescription filled for Ciprofloxacin 500mg, one tablet every 12 hours for three days, 6 tablets. See your health care provider if you are less than 18 years old for other antibiotic options. **DO NOT DISCARD THIS MEDICATION AFTER YOUR TRIP.** You may not experience symptoms until after you return home.

A box of over the counter Imodium and Pepto-Bismol can sometimes be the answer. Taking 1 tablet of Pepto-Bismol daily can help prevent traveler's diarrhea. If you develop diarrhea while on the mission trip, speak to the medical team leader as to how to treat, **DO NOT** start taking your antibiotics prior to speaking to the medical team leader.

Metronidazole 500mg twice a day is used if dysentery is the problem, but is usually carried by the medical team.

Consult your health care provider or local travel clinic if you have other questions. The Midstate Medical Center Travel Clinic has worked with our group for many years. Make your appointments **NOW** as they tend to fill up quickly. (203) 694-5444.

**YOUR PERSONAL MEDICATIONS:** Bring enough for the duration of the trip; carry in **original containers; place in your carry-on luggage.** Be sure all information about any medical conditions and medications you

may be taking is on your application. Discuss any concerns with the medical team leader. **Reminder:** some medications make you sensitive to the sun so check with your pharmacist.

**CONSTIPATION:** can be very common because of diet change. I encourage you to eat lots of fruit while you are there. In the case of more severe constipation, having a few high fiber bars and prunes on hand can have a great effect on the body! Please speak to the medical team leader before taking any medications to alleviate constipation.

**OVER THE COUNTER MEDICATION:** Bring whatever items you think you might use; Tylenol or ibuprofen are always a good idea to bring. Also consider bringing packages of powdered rehydration drinks, such as Gatorade. It is very hot in the DR and you will sweat out a lot of water.

**OTHER "MEDICINAL" THINGS TO BRING:** Ear plugs (many dogs and roosters); **BUG REPELLENT** spray/wipes/wrist bands; hand sanitizer that is 60% alcohol; **SUN SCREEN.**

## **IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

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**TOP THINGS TO REMEMBER: DRINK PLENTY OF FLUIDS! USE HANDSANITIZER DILIGENTLY! USE SUNSCREEN AND REAPPLY EVERY 2-3 HOURS!**

**DRINKING FLUIDS:** Keeping well hydrated is necessary to feeling well. Drink plenty of purified or bottled water and avoid ice unless it comes from the mission house. Limit soda as tends to make you more dehydrated. Powdered rehydration drinks are easy to carry. Bring your own water bottle with a covered mouthpiece. **DO NOT** share water bottles with one another.

If you are interested, freeze your water bottle before you leave, place it in a plastic bag, and put it in your personal checked bag. When you get to the airport in the DR, you will have cold water to enjoy on the bus ride.

**REMEMBER: IF YOU ARE THIRSTY, YOU ARE ALREADY DEHYDRATED.**

Use **ONLY** bottled/purified water when brushing your teeth. You may want to bring an extra toothbrush in case you forget.

**SHOWERING:** Water conservation is of utmost importance with a team of our size. Limit showers to once a day. Turn water off between shampooing and washing etc.

**TOILETS:** Toilet paper or any other hygiene items: **NEVER** go down the toilet. All products should go into the garbage provided. If you make a mistake, be sure to fix it. And remember, "If it's yellow, let it mellow. If it's brown, flush it down!"

**FOOD:** Eat **ONLY** food prepared in the mission house or approved restaurants. Use hand sanitizer before you eat. Use utensils whenever possible. Bring individually packed snacks, such as fiber/granola bars, dried fruits or nuts; crackers and peanut butter. If you are a picky eater, **BE PREPARED!** Not eating a meal is **NOT** an option! The food is delicious. Eat the fruit served in the morning. Only eat boiled veggies that are served at the mission house.

**SUN PROTECTION:** Apply sunscreen before you go out into the field and reapply often. Bring a hat and neck scarf (for sweat); keep shoulders covered.

**WORKING IN THE MISSION FIELD:** We want you to feel your best and be safe out in the field. ALWAYS wear closed toe shoes! Foot coverage is best at the beach, too. Wear hats and gloves as needed. If working with cement, please wear goggles/sunglasses to protect your eyes. Construction teams: If working with the concrete, WASH off all dust from the concrete. Some can have a reaction on their skin when the lime in the concrete combines with your sweat. It is not a common reaction, but some are sensitive. Better to be safe than sorry!

**PACE YOURSELF:** take breaks and sit in the shade, drink often. Do not wander off from the team. If you are not feeling well, let the leader know. CARE FOR EACH OTHER!

**CONTACTS:** Glasses are better than contacts out in the field as there is a great deal of dust and smoke in the air. If you choose to wear your contacts, use DILIGENT hand washing. Wash your hands immediately prior to placing your fingers near your eye. If using hand sanitizer to wash your hands, be sure to let your hands dry thoroughly prior to putting our fingers I your eyes. (You don't want to feel the burn) After washing your hands, DO NOT touch ANYTHING before touching your contacts. Make sure you have an extra set of lenses and your glasses, just as back up.

**LOCAL ANIMALS:** Please do not touch/pet/attempt to ride any of the animals seen in the DR. Not even the dogs!

## **HANDWASHING**

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### **USE IT AND USE IT OFTEN!**

Please wash hands often--it is your first line protection against illness. Use a 60% alcohol hand sanitizer even more often!! And as simple as it sounds, keep your hands out of your mouth and avoid using your hands to eat your food. Wet ones/Antibacterial wipes are handy to get the grit off of your skin after a day of work. They also come in handy for a mid week cleaning of your water bottle mouthpiece.

### **ONCE HOME:**

Traveler's diarrhea, and other illnesses can start after you have returned home. If you are feeling poorly, seek medical care. Be sure to finish your chloroquine.

## **ZIKA**

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Because Zika virus is primarily spread by mosquitoes, CDC recommends that travelers to the Dominican Republic [protect themselves from mosquito bites](#).

### **What can travelers do to prevent Zika?**

There is no vaccine or medicine for Zika. Travelers can protect themselves by [preventing mosquito bites](#):

- Cover exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Use EPA-registered insect repellents containing DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE, also called para-menthane-diol [PMD]), or IR3535. Always use as directed.

- Pregnant and breastfeeding women can use all EPA-registered insect repellents, including DEET, according to the product label.
- Most repellents, including DEET, can be used on children older than 2 months. (OLE should not be used on children younger than 3 years.)
- Use [permethrin-treated](#) clothing and gear (such as boots, pants, socks, and tents). You can buy pre-treated clothing and gear or treat them yourself.
- Stay in places with air conditioning and window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside.
- Sleep under a mosquito bed net if air conditioned or screened rooms are not available or if sleeping outdoors.
- Mosquito netting can be used to cover babies younger than 2 months old in carriers, strollers, or cribs to protect them from mosquito bites.

#### **After travel:**

Many people infected with Zika virus do not feel sick. If a mosquito bites an infected person while the virus is still in that person's blood, it can spread the virus by biting another person. **Even if they do not feel sick, travelers returning to the United States from the Dominican Republic should take steps to prevent mosquito bites for 3 weeks so that they do not spread Zika to uninfected mosquitoes.**

Travelers returning from the Dominican Republic who have a pregnant partner should either use condoms or not have sex for the rest of the pregnancy.

#### **If you feel sick and think you may have Zika:**

- Talk to your doctor if you develop a fever with a rash, joint pain, or red eyes. Tell him or her about your travel.
- Take acetaminophen (paracetamol) to relieve fever and pain. Do not take aspirin, products containing aspirin, or other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, such as ibuprofen.
- Get lots of rest and drink plenty of liquids.

Many people infected with Zika virus do not get sick. Among those who do develop symptoms, sickness is usually mild, with symptoms that last for several days to a week. Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) is a rare disorder that can cause muscle weakness and paralysis for a few weeks to several months. This has only been seen a in a small number of cases and is rare.

#### **If you are pregnant or planning a family, please speak to me personally.**

Please see the CDC website for any further information.

In the meantime, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at:

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