



Staying healthy during winter sun holidays

Planning a winter sun break or visiting family and friends? Here is a quick reminder about protecting your health:

Be trip ready

Ideally, start preparing four to six weeks before you go - you may need vaccines or malaria prevention tablets, so book an appointment with your GP, pharmacist or travel clinic immediately. Even if you are travelling last minute or grew up in the country you are visiting, it is still important to get advice before you go.

Vaccines

Check which vaccines may be needed by looking at NaTHNaC's country information pages. Make sure all your other routine (non-travel) vaccines are up-to-date too.

Malaria

Malaria is a serious, sometimes fatal disease found in many tropical countries – including popular winter destinations like The Gambia, Kenya, South Africa, Indonesia, Thailand, India and Sri Lanka. It is spread by night-biting mosquitoes.

- Get professional advice about malaria **before** you go.
- **Check** NaTHNaC's country information pages to see if malaria prevention tablets are recommended.
- Take the **right** malaria prevention tablets (as recommended by your doctor, nurse or pharmacist) - even if you grew up in a country where there is malaria, and make sure you finish the course.
- Avoid insect bites - this **reduces** your chance of catching malaria and other illnesses spread by insects, like dengue fever. Wear tops with long sleeves and long trousers, apply insect repellent regularly, and sleep under a mosquito net if you are not in enclosed, air conditioned accommodation.
- If you have a fever, flu or **any** unusual symptoms, you **must** get urgent medical advice, even after you return home - you could still have malaria.



Food and water hygiene

Illnesses spread by contaminated food and drinks like travellers' diarrhoea are more common in some countries.

You can reduce your risk of these illnesses by following some basic food and water hygiene advice. Avoid potentially risky foods ie. salads, peeled fruit/vegetables and cold meats. While travelling also avoid drinking tap water, including ice.

Health and insurance

Most countries do not have free healthcare, so buy comprehensive travel medical insurance before you go. Check the small print for exclusions and tell your insurance company about any current and past health problems, including all the medications you take.

Rabies

Remember animals in many countries can carry rabies – a fatal virus spread by animal saliva. Avoid direct contact with animals and if you do get bitten, scratched or licked on open skin by ANY animal, clean the wound thoroughly and get urgent medical treatment, even if you think the risk is low.

Safety

Road rules may be more relaxed, so take care as a driver, passenger and pedestrian.

Never swim alone, in the dark, after drinking alcohol or taking drugs. Always supervise children in and around water, and get local advice on tides and safe places to swim.

Check water depth before diving and never dive into a swimming pool from a balcony; every year deaths and injuries are reported from balcony falls.

Remain alert to your personal safety. Check the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's country advice for safety updates and information about local customs before you go.

Sun

Take care in the sun - stay in the shade when the sun is hottest (10am to 4pm) and always use a high SPF sun cream, applied generously and frequently, especially after swimming. Drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids and be aware that drinking alcohol in hot climates can cause dehydration.



Safe sex

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are a risk worldwide - but are more common in some countries. Often people with STIs are completely well and do not realise they are infected - many STIs, including HIV, do not have symptoms at first.

Carry condoms and use a new one **every time** you have sex. If there is a chance you could have an infection, get advice from a sexual health clinic.

Links

- [Cancer Research UK: Skin Cancer – advice on Preventing Sunburn and Enjoying the Sun Safely](#)
- [Foreign and Commonwealth Office/ABTA: Holiday Brits risking their lives on balconies](#)
- [Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Know Before You Go](#)
- [NaTHNaC: Malaria](#)
- [NaTHNaC: Personal Safety](#)
- [NHS Choices: Safer sex on holiday](#)

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