

# Medical Matters - FAQ

## 1. Where can I find out about travel health insurance?

See our FAQs on [Travel Insurance](#) for detailed information and advice.

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## 2. Where can I get information about diseases and health conditions in foreign countries?

Consult the Public Health Agency of Canada's [Travel Medicine Program](#). Our Travels Reports also contain information on health issues pertaining to specific destinations.

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## 3. Where can I find out if I need any special vaccinations before I leave Canada?

For information on vaccinations and other preventive health measures for foreign travel, consult the Public Health Agency of Canada's [Travel Medicine Program](#). Before travelling to any destination, find out well in advance of your trip if you need any special vaccinations or preventive medications for such illnesses as yellow fever, typhoid, meningitis, Japanese encephalitis, hepatitis, and malaria. For instance, a meningococcal vaccination is required for pilgrims travelling to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, for the annual hajj. Please note that, in certain countries, an International Certificate of Vaccination for yellow fever is a legal requirement for entry.

**Note:** You may need to start receiving your vaccination shots or taking medication six to eight weeks before you leave Canada. Also, make sure that your routine immunizations — diphtheria, whooping cough (pertussis), tetanus, polio, measles, mumps, and rubella — are up-to-date. Other immunization requirements for travel will vary according to your age, existing medical conditions, and the nature and duration of your trip.

## 4. Are there any special medical precautions to take when travelling with children?

If you are travelling with infants or small children, you may need to arrange an alternative or accelerated childhood immunization schedule for them. Talk to your pediatrician, family doctor, or travel medicine clinic. Also, consult the FAQs on [Children and Travel](#) and our fact sheet entitled [Tips for Travelling with Children](#), as well as the responsible [Foreign Government Office Accredited to Canada](#), in case additional medical precautions are required.

## **5. Can I take prescription medications abroad with me and, if so, how should I pack them?**

Prescription medications for legitimate health conditions may come under intense scrutiny by foreign officials. In some countries, drugs that are legal and readily available in Canada are considered illegal, require a prescription, or may arouse suspicions among local officials and customs and immigration authorities. It is always best to contact the [Foreign Government Offices Accredited to Canada](#) of the country you plan to visit to confirm the status of your medication.

When travelling abroad with prescription or over-the-counter medication:

- Pack all medications in their original, labelled containers to avoid problems with customs officials.
- Do not try to save luggage space by combining medications into a single container.
- Pack an extra supply of medication in case you are away for longer than expected.
- Carry a copy of the original prescription and ensure that both the generic and trade names of the medication are included in case of loss or theft. A doctor's note describing why you are taking the medication is also recommended.
- If you are carrying any unusual medication, check that it is legal and readily available in the country you intend to visit.

Canadian visitors to the United States should be aware that their personal medication may be subject to U.S. drug importation laws and regulations. In general, personal importation of a 90-day supply of medication is allowed, but only if the drug is not available in the United States. U.S. customs officials have relaxed their policy on importation of prescription drugs through the mail from Canada. However, all packages are still carefully scrutinized. For further information, visit the website of the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#).

## **6. Can I bring back to Canada prescription medication that is not available here?**

The Public Health Agency of Canada allows you, as an individual, to import a three-month supply of prescription medication for your personal use or for an immediate family member. You must personally bring the medication over the border in hospital or pharmacy dispensed packaging. Don't forget to inform your own doctor about the prescribed treatment.

## **7. Can I bring back to Canada over-the-counter medication that is not available here?**

Generally, you may return to Canada with a three-month supply of over-the-counter medication for your personal use or for an immediate family member.

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## **8. If I have a pacemaker or other medical device, will there be a problem when I go through airport metal detection screening?**

Upon entering the screening area, you should advise the screening officers of any medical implants, artificial limbs, or mobility aids that may be affected by the magnetic fields of the metal detection equipment. You should bring medical information with you to verify your medical condition. Further information is available from the [Canadian Air Transport Security Authority](#). Check with the appropriate [foreign government office accredited to Canada](#) to inquire about country-specific requirements.

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## **9. Can I experience problems with airline security and customs officers abroad if I travel with syringes?**

To avoid problems with customs officials, carry a medical certificate from your doctor indicating that syringes are for medical use. As syringes may be difficult to purchase abroad, take enough to last your entire trip. Syringes are usually prohibited in carry-on luggage for security reasons. Contact the airline before departure to verify its regulations concerning syringes and consult the [Transport Canada](#) website for further information on air travel.

## **10. In the event of a medical emergency, how can Canadian officials help?**

Many Canadians fall ill and require medical assistance while travelling abroad. If you require medical attention, contact the nearest [Canadian government office abroad](#) or the [Emergency Operations Centre](#).

Consular officials at the nearest Canadian government office abroad can provide the following services in the event of a medical emergency:

- Provide you with a list of local doctors and medical facilities.
- Report to family members back home.
- Assist in arranging for a medical evacuation to Canada or a third country, along with a medical escort. Be aware that medical evacuations can be extremely expensive, and it is your responsibility to ensure you have appropriate travel health insurance to cover the costs.

- Help with medical insurance issues.
- Assist in obtaining financial help from family and friends if required.

### **11. What should I do if I feel ill when I return to Canada?**

See a doctor as soon as possible. Inform the doctor — without being asked — where you have been abroad. If you were ill while travelling, tell your doctor what your symptoms were and what treatment you received.

### **12. If I return to Canada after an extended absence abroad, will I be eligible for health insurance right away?**

Eligibility and enrolment procedures vary, because the delivery of health care services is primarily a provincial or territorial responsibility. Coverage may be provided from the date you re-establish residence or following a waiting period, according to the requirements of the province or territory. You may have to wait for up to three months after your return to Canada before your coverage resumes or begins. Contact a private insurance company to obtain coverage during this period. For additional information, contact the responsible provincial or territorial health authority.

**To access underlined links visit:**

**Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada**  
<http://www.voyage.gc.ca/faq/medical-eng.asp#5>

# Equipment, adaptations and services while on holiday

## What may be available

When booking accommodation direct, or through an organisation or travel agency, check what's on offer.

Some places are able to support people with different needs. For example, some hotels have rooms adapted specifically for people who are blind or visually impaired. Here are some examples of the types of adaptations and services that may be available:

- wheel-in showers
- raised toilet seats
- manual and electric bath hoists
- manual and electric bed hoists
- alarm systems in rooms
- vibrating alarms

Depending on your needs, check what help staff can provide. For example, can they assist wheelchair users, or are they trained to use sign language?

## Planning to go away

### Communicating your needs

It's important to remember that countries differ and not all services and facilities will be available or accessible to you. If you need a particular service or facility, check that it's available before booking your trip.

Often an impairment is not obvious to other people, so make sure you explain your particular requirements clearly. Don't assume that staff at travel agents, travel offices or airports will automatically know or understand your needs.

This is particularly important when booking by phone, post or over the internet.

**For more information visit:**

**Directgov**

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/index.htm>

# **Taking medication abroad**

## **Taking medication with you**

If you are taking medication with you on a trip or holiday:

- make sure that you have enough for your whole stay - and an extra supply in case of delays or emergencies
- get a letter from your doctor to say that you need the medication and keep a list in case you lose it or need to get more during your stay
- list the proper names of the medication - not just the trade names. Keep it in its original packaging
- keep a written record with you of any medical condition affecting you such as diabetes or haemophilia

## **If you are flying**

An airline is entitled to demand that a passenger travels with a companion if the passenger is not self-sufficient. This includes administering their own medicines and medical procedures.

Don't claim that you are self-sufficient if you are not. You may cause yourself and the airline serious problems because they will be unable to meet your basic needs.

Always pack your medication in your hand luggage where possible in case your main luggage goes missing.

## **Medication and other countries**

There may be restrictions on taking medication into the country. You will need to check with the Embassy or High Commission of the country you are visiting.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) is responsible for foreign affairs. The travel section of their website contains information for anyone planning a trip overseas and has information by country.