

# Summer travel: advice for students and young holidaymakers

**Off on a summer break? See our guide to staying safe and healthy abroad**

## Before you travel

Check our [Country Information pages](#) for current health risks at your destination, including any vaccine and malaria recommendations. See the [Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office \(FCDO\)](#) for advice on safety and security issues, entry requirements and travel warnings for your destination.

See your GP, practice nurse, pharmacist or travel clinic ideally four to six weeks before your trip to check you are up to date with all of the vaccines normally [recommended in the UK](#) and to get any travel vaccines and malaria tablets if they are recommended.

## Going on a last-minute holiday?

It's never too late to get travel health advice; some vaccines can be given last minute, and malaria tablets (if needed) can be started on the day you travel.

Get comprehensive [travel health insurance](#) that covers any pre-existing health conditions, prescribed medicines and all the activities you plan to do while away. Apply for a [Global Health Insurance Card \(GHIC\)](#); this helps you access state healthcare at a reduced cost, or sometimes for free in some countries. A GHIC is not a substitute for insurance and you should still get suitable [travel insurance](#).

Take a basic [first aid kit](#) including items like pain relief, gauze, antiseptic, tape, plasters, tweezers, and any medicines you take.

## While you are away

- [Alcohol](#) - Moderate your alcohol intake, avoid alcohol sold in unlicensed places and never accept drinks from strangers or leave your drink unattended. Fake alcohol is an issue in some countries that could put you at risk of severe, even fatal poisoning. Know the [signs of alcohol poisoning and what to do](#), quick action could save a life. '[Know what is in your drink?](#)' has more information about methanol poisoning. Remember, alcohol reduces inhibitions and can increase your chance of having an accident or doing something risky. Never drink and drive or swim after drinking.
- [Travelling with friends](#) - stick together if possible, share your location and agree a place and

time to meet.

- [Stay safe](#) - take care on and around balconies and water. Never dive into a swimming pool from a balcony. Follow local advice about tides and never swim alone. Always wear a helmet if riding a horse, bicycle or motorbike/moped. Avoid driving at night.
- [Blood-borne infections](#) - body piercing, tattoos, illegal drug use and unprotected sex all put you at risk of blood-borne illnesses like HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C. You may be tempted to get tattoos/piercings abroad, but safety standards may not be the same as in the UK. If you decide to get tattoos or body piercings abroad, always check sterile, single use needles are used and disposed of carefully after each procedure.
- [Food and water](#) - be careful with what you eat and drink and follow basic hygiene rules.
- [Travellers' diarrhoea](#) is common - be prepared. Visit a chemist before you go and get advice about over-the-counter diarrhoea treatments suitable for your trip. Remember to drink plenty of fluids and if you have diarrhoea with blood and/or fever, see a doctor straight away.
- Protect yourself against [insects and ticks](#) day and night. Bites can be irritating but can also cause infections in some countries. If you are travelling to countries where there may be insect spread infections, reduce your risk by covering up with clothing as much as possible, using an insect repellent ideally with 50% DEET (or a suitable alternative Icaridin (Picaridin), Eucalyptus citriodora oil (sometimes listed as PMD) or 3-ethylaminopropionate (IR3535) if you can't use DEET) and when sleeping using mosquito nets and window screens in your accommodation whenever possible.
- [Minimise animal contact](#), avoid touching, petting or feeding wild or domestic animals. Any animal bite, scratch or saliva contact should be scrupulously washed with soap and water, and urgent medical attention sought.
- [Safer sex](#) - carry your own condoms and practice safer sex. If you think you have been exposed to a sexually transmitted infection (STI), get STI screening as soon as you can.
- [Protect against the sun](#) - by wearing light, loose fitting clothes, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses. Apply plenty of high factor (at least 30 SPF with UVA rating of 4/5 stars) sunscreen frequently, especially after activities where sunscreen may come off, including swimming, or sweating.

## When you return

Get urgent medical attention for any fever, flu-like symptoms, prolonged or bloody diarrhoea, abdominal pain, or a rash if they appear once you are back in the UK. Remember to tell your doctor, nurse, or other health professional that you have recently travelled abroad. This is especially important if you visited malaria risk countries, even if you took malaria prevention tablets and have been home for a while (an urgent malaria test must be arranged).

If you had unprotected sex while abroad or think you might have a sexually transmitted infection, go to a free, confidential [sexual health clinic](#) for advice.

## Resources

- [ABTA the travel association - Have a safe and healthy holiday](#)
- [ABTA the travel association: Top tips for swimming safely](#)
- [ABTA the travel association: Quad bike and moped safety](#)
- [ABTA/FCDO: Balcony Safety](#)
- [ABTA: Advice for young holidaymakers](#)
- [Drinkaware: Staying safe on holiday](#)
- [Drinkaware: The dangers of fake alcohol](#)
- [Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office: Foreign travel checklist](#)
- [Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office: Festivals in Europe: Travel checklist](#)
- [Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office: Mental health and wellbeing abroad](#)
- [Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office: Visiting friends and relatives abroad: health advice](#)
- [FRANK: Spiking - how to protect yourself on a night out](#)
- [Personal safety](#)
- [Pregnancy](#)
- [Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents: Staying Safe on Holiday](#)
- [Celebrating Pride abroad?](#)
- [Travel Aware - Get Travel Smart](#)

## REFERENCES

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