

Long stay travel

Taking a prolonged trip overseas can be a fantastic experience. However, long stay travellers do have an increased risk of experiencing health problems at some time during their stay. This risk will depend on the destination, travel plans, pre existing medical conditions and medical facilities in the area. Pre travel planning is important.

Pre travel arrangements:

- If you have any current medical conditions or medications, get a health check up in plenty of time before you set off. Those taking medication should investigate whether they can get top up supplies (remember in many developing countries there is a problem with fake and substandard drugs). It is helpful to carry a list of the medication you require with the generic names (rather than the brand name of the drug).
- Have a dental check up, ideally a number of months before you go.
- Seek advice about vaccinations well in advance.
- For malaria affected areas, invest in an insecticide treated mosquito net if you won't have air conditioning at your destination. Also, discuss taking a standby malaria treatment pack with you, particularly if you will be travelling away from reliable medical help.
- Many expatriates find it difficult to adapt to a new culture, but good pre travel preparation is usually helpful. If you are going to be based in one area, try to learn a little about the language and culture before you go. Try and talk to others that have worked in the area about their experiences, they may be able to offer some useful advice. Consider whether this trip is suitable for you, do you adapt well to change?
- Check that you have health insurance for your stay. If you will be based in one location, research where you can obtain medical help if necessary. If you are going to an area with poor medical facilities, consider going on a first aid course and buy a first aid book to take with you. Take a comprehensive first aid pack and sterile medical equipment (needles and syringes etc).
- Consider how you will treat water in the area, tap water in many countries is not safe to drink.
- Check the Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice www.fco.gov.uk so that you are familiar with the safety and security issues in the area.

At the destination:

- If you are going to live in an area with insect borne diseases, eliminate mosquito breeding sites from around the home, fill in ditches and remove rubbish. Screen windows and doors.
- Protect skin from the sun's harmful rays with hats, clothing and sun screens (especially with children).
- Road traffic accidents are more common in developing countries, take care on the roads and if you have a car / bike don't neglect the maintenance. Many accidents are linked to alcohol.
- Be patient with cultural differences and limit your expectations (tasks often take much longer to complete in developing countries). Expatriates should try to make friends with the local population as well as other expatriates
- Take care with your sexual health, blood borne viruses are more prevalent in many developing countries.

This information is produced by MASTA as a general guide to be used in conjunction with advice from your doctor or nurse. To obtain a health brief tailored to your journey visit a MASTA associated travel clinic or www.masta.com