Planning for the Unplanned Illness: Travel Checklist

Whether you are an experienced traveler or planning your first dream vacation, we all hope for smooth journeys. But sometimes, unexpected illnesses or medical emergencies interrupt your trip. Below are tips for preparing for a potential medical emergency while traveling.

Make your health a priority.
- Before making travel plans, research the health risks and safety concerns specific to the country you’re visiting.
- When you are sick, you can spread diseases to others. Delay your travel and stay home if you are contagious or if travel would prevent your healing.

Pack smart.
- Prepare a travel health kit with items you may need, especially those that might be hard to find on your trip.
- Fill your travel health kit with your prescriptions and over-the-counter medicines (enough to last your whole trip, plus a little extra), a first-aid kit, insect repellent, sunscreen (SPF15 or higher), aloe, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, water disinfection tablets, and your health insurance card.

Plan for unexpected health and travel issues.
- Consider buying travel insurance that covers healthcare and emergency evacuation, especially if going to remote areas.
- If traveling out of the country, make sure you have a plan to get care in case you need it. Check if your health insurance covers medical care abroad—many plans don’t!

Prepare for emergencies.
- Leave copies of important travel documents (i.e., itinerary, contact information, credit cards, passport, and proof of school enrollment) at home, in case they are lost.
- Back up emergency contact information in case you lose your phone. Designate an emergency contact in your phone.
- Fill out the emergency contact page inside your passport with the name, address, and telephone number of who to contact.

The International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers (IAMAT)
Find a list of English-speaking foreign healthcare providers at your next travel destination. IAMAT, a non-profit organization dedicated to travel health, provides health information to prevent illness during travel and manages a global network of doctors committed to helping sick travelers.

The Department of State’s Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)
Stay Informed, Stay Connected, Stay Safe! Enroll to receive free travel warnings for your destination and also ensure that the US Department of State knows where you are in case you have serious legal, medical, or financial difficulties while traveling. STEP can also help friends and family contact you if there is an emergency at home.
As the autumn breeze sets in, you may be attending some of PA’s many fall events. Making sure that you only eat food that is prepared properly is important to keeping you healthy. By following some simple tips for food safety, you can enjoy all the fall flavors without the upset stomach or health risks.

**Choose Wisely**
When deciding where to get your food, look for clean places with workers wearing gloves or using utensils for food preparation and serving. If possible, check to see if they have alcohol based hand sanitizer or a sink for employees to wash their hands.

**Check for Permits**
Make sure the food vendors have permits from health authorities. These show that they follow safety rules and get checked regularly. The permits should be easy to see, but you can ask if you don’t see one.

**Food Temperature Matters**
Cold dishes like salads and desserts should be nice and cold, while hot foods should be served really hot. Use the USDA’s minimum internal temperature chart. Eat the perishable stuff right away, and don’t leave food in the sun, car, or at room temperature for too long.

**Fall Fair and Festival Food**

- **Go for Cooked Foods**
  Fully cooked foods are usually the safest at fairs and festivals. Grilled meats, hot dogs, and fried treats can be cooked at high temperatures, which kills bad bacteria. Avoid eating raw or undercooked foods (measure the inside temperature), as they can carry foodborne illnesses.

- **Keep Clean**
  Wash your hands really well with soap and warm water, especially before eating. If there’s no sink nearby, you can use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Also, try not to touch your face, nose, or mouth to keep the germs away.

- **Be Careful Around Animals**
  Washing your hands is super important after petting animals or being near them, even if you didn’t touch them. Wash your children’s hands, too.
  **Do not** bring pacifiers, bottles, sippy cups, or any other items a child may put in their mouth into areas where animals are present.

If you suspect you’ve contracted a foodborne illness, call your local health department, or the PA Department of Health at 1-877-HEALTH to talk to a public health nurse, even if you’ve recovered. Filling out a food safety-compliant form plays an important role in preventing foodborne illness.

**Contact the Bureau of Epidemiology**
Sign up to receive the quarterly Safe Travel Bulletin or to give topic ideas ra-pwsafetravel@pa.gov.