

# Travel Clinic Gets You Ready to Go Abroad

Prepare yourself for your trip with vaccines, medication

by Abby Malik, *Staff Writer*

It's hard to beat the feelings of exhilaration that come from traveling abroad. Beautiful places, unique cuisines, new cultures – it can be full of wonders. Traveling abroad also takes a lot of preparation, and one of the most important things to consider is taking care of your health before, during and after your big trip.

UKHealthCare's Travel Clinic in Lexington is a full-service facility that offers personalized consultations for people traveling abroad. Dr. Susan Spengler, a physician at the clinic, has several important considerations specifically for older adults. One of those considerations is vaccines.

"The actual vaccines recommended for a trip are specific to the individual's itinerary, the person's assessed risk of those diseases, past immunization history and more," Spengler said. "These are all things we assess during a personalized consultation at our travel clinic."

Vaccines also have specific age ranges, including some that are not appropriate for seniors, and not all clinics carry age-relevant vaccines. In addition, some vaccines require a series of doses, so the clinic recommends scheduling a travel consultation three to six months before your trip.

Because medication use is higher among older adults, the clinic also recommends checking for potential interactions with vaccines and travel-specific medications, such as antibiotics for self-treatment of traveler's diarrhea.

Another consideration for older adults is the potential risks of a vaccine. Spengler suggests travelers and doctors have a careful dialogue and evaluation of a vaccine's costs and benefits. With older

adults, there is a higher incidence of potential serious side effects with some vaccines.

"A final decision can include recommending a vaccine, writing a waiver if the vaccine is required by the [destination] country but the risk from the vaccine outweighs benefits, up to and including recommending cancellation of the trip," Spengler said.

Older adults, who in general may be in a higher risk category for major medical occurrences, should look into evacuation insurance, especially if they are planning a trip to a developing country.

"Figuring out how to arrange and pay for an evacuation in the face of medical emergency that can't be handled locally can be life threatening," Spengler said.

Older adults are at a higher risk for traveler's thrombosis – the development of blood clots in the legs – which can be brought on by a combination of inactivity, dehydration and decreased cabin pressure during a flight. Ways to minimize the risk might include doing small movement activities during a flight, wearing compression stockings or taking aspirin or prescription anti-clotting drugs.

The UK Travel Clinic is located in the offices of Kentucky Clinic South, 2400 Greatstone Point. Appointments are available by calling (859) 257-5150.



## Medication Check List

Here are some recommendations about traveling from Dr. Susan Spengler, a physician at UKHealthCare's Travel Clinic.

- Leave your medication in original bottles. If possible, pack one full set in your carry-on and one in your checked bags. You never know when your checked bags will take a different trip.
- Get a "medical necessity" letter from your doctor if you're traveling with a lot of medications, unusual medical supplies or syringes.
- Carry a list of your medications and their dosages as well as any allergies you have. Leave a copy of the list with someone at home.
- Carry an extra pair of prescription glasses or at least a copy of your prescription.
- When you're in the sun and heat, stay hydrated and avoid overheating. Wear light-colored and breathable clothing.
- To help avoid or lessen the chances of contacting traveler's diarrhea, eat pasteurized yogurt with live acidophilus cultures prior to and during trip. Take probiotic capsules during the trip and carry Pepto-Bismol and Imodium for mild-to-moderate diarrhea, or bring a doctor-prescribed antibiotic for severe cases.

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