

Happy Holidays

Vacations can be exciting and rejuvenating, but things can go wrong if you aren't prepared with some basics. Make sure your checklist includes these for a stress-free break, writes

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Summer is here and most people are packing up for long vacations. Whether it's to the beaches or mountains, it's always best to take precautions against health issues that may arise. A new place, change of climate and food could disrupt your system. A good way to avoid ruining your vacation is to proactively research and plan smart.

MEDICAL CHECK-UP AND VACCINATIONS

If you're planning to rough it out this summer at offbeat locations, consider getting up to date with your vaccines. "A general check-up and update of shots will go a long way to stay protected from the many risks that come with backpacking, trekking, cross-country bike-riding, etc.," said Dr Bindu Sen, a general physician in Mumbai. Since offbeat vacations can cause a bigger shock to the system, it's wise to get an update on your current health status. Many destinations may be at the risk of illnesses such as hepatitis, dengue and typhoid and you surely need protection from these.

Before leaving for your vacation, it's also good to get advice on how to avoid getting sick.

Carry a medical kit, Sen recommended, and that should include basics that can help with diarrhoea, motion sickness and dehydration.

ALLERGIES

It can be quite annoying to get your allergies when you are holidaying. The best way to brace for an attack is to research



TRAVEL SENSE

- Always wash your hands before eating
- Use the right sunscreen whenever you are stepping out
- Avoid drinking water in public places; always carry a bottle with clean water
- Limit caffeine and alcohol intake to avoid getting dehydrated
- Invest in good-quality clothes, mufflers, scarves (for cold regions) and hats and UV-coated sunglasses (for warm regions)



and equip yourself with medicines and plan your vacation around the weather and pollen seasons to keep your allergies at bay. "Excessive sun exposure can give rise to polymorphous light eruption (PMLE), which is different from a sunburn. It is commonly seen on the arms, nape of the neck, upper chest and back," said Dr Kaleem Khan, consultant in dermatology at Surya Hospitals in Mumbai. Hanging around at the beach increases the possibility of rashes due to marine life like jellyfish, corals and sea anemones. Therefore, it's always good to carry a basic medical kit for the most common allergic reactions. Check with your general physician before setting out on your vacation.

FOOD AND HYDRATION

For most foodies, the best way to soak in a new culture is by experiencing the cuisine in its most authentic way. Arfa Samreen, senior dietitian at Vikram Hospital, Bengaluru, said the best way to enjoy local food is by researching about it and the ingredients that are used before trying it out. "You can sign up for a

food tour, as they teach you about food culture of that area and also about great places to eat," she said. Local food carts may not maintain the same level of hygiene as restaurants. So, if you want to try the local delicacy, order foods that you see come hot off the grill, she added.

Sanjay Gupta, a travel agent from Pune, opined that while it is nice to try local cuisine, it's best not to overdo it. "Be realistic of how much you can explore. If you are not used to very heavy, spicy or exotic cuisines, trying it all during a vacation may not give you the best experience. If you have a sensitive stomach and are generally not very experimental, stick to simple foods," he said.

Gupta also suggested buying fruits to keep one hydrated. "I always recommend visiting local markets for fresh food and fruits as it is easy on the pocket as well," he added.

It's also important to get creative with hydration, even if you're planning to travel to colder vacation spots. "It's best to carry water infused with lime, mint, ginger or other variations. To stay hydrated, your body needs more than just

water. You need electrolytes — sodium, chloride, magnesium, potassium and calcium are especially important to have a healthy nerve and muscle function," said Samreen. Hydrating foods like milk, cucumber, celery, melons, oranges, tomatoes and bananas will help you recuperate from loss of fluids.

RIGHT CLOTHES

It's important to dress appropriately, taking care of the weather pattern that can be expected. "If you're hitting a colder climate, it's best to research and even ask on online travel groups about appropriate clothing that you may require during your vacation. It can get very inconvenient if you go somewhere and find your apparel not sufficient," said travel agent Gupta. He added that for hot or humid weather conditions, you should stick to cotton and linen clothes that will keep you cooler, and drink lots of fluids. "Pick light, breathable clothes and always pack extra clothes for emergency," he said.

SUN PROTECTION

Whether you're at the beach or the mountains, it's best to use sunscreen, simply because you will be spending most of your time outdoors. Dr Raina Nahar, consultant dermatologist at Nanavati Super Speciality Hospital, Mumbai, said, "Choose a sunscreen with broad spectrum sun protection, which is sweat-resistant. Oil-free moisturisers and hydrating body mists with thermal water rejuvenate the skin well." She added that UV-induced skin allergies like prickly heat, solar urticaria and certain autoimmune skin disorders aggravate in warm, humid climate.

"If you're planning an active time in the sea or at the beach, clothes with UPF (ultraviolet protection factor) can help protect the skin," said Khan from Surya Hospitals. It's also best to avoid trying new products during vacations. Stick to your tried and tested skin creams to avoid a reaction on exposure to the sun (photo-contact dermatitis).

You can plan your outdoor activities for early mornings and evenings, and avoid the sun between 10 am and 4 pm.

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