

The safety and well-being of our Youthline participants is our first priority. While each team has a Medical Mentor that will be available to participants as a resource during the international trip, **it is the responsibility of each participant to take care of his/her own health while traveling.**

Please prepare for your international trip by reading carefully through the following safety precautions, and by bringing any items needed to ensure your own safety.

Your team's Medical Mentor will have an emergency supply of medications and first aid supplies; however, you are responsible to bring your own supply of personal medications and other items to aid in keeping you healthy while traveling. Plan on bringing the following items:

- Any prescriptions or vitamins that you take on a regular basis. If you have any allergies or medical conditions make sure that you have talked with your medical mentor! If you have asthma be sure to bring your inhaler, allergies, bring an epi-pen, etc.
- Anti-malaria medication (which can be prescribed to you at your team's Medical Clinic in February)
- Z-pack or Cipro-- Even if you think you will not use this please get a prescription anyway and bring it with you! You don't want to spend your entire trip being sick!
- Ibuprofen or Tylenol, Benadryl, Pepto Bismo
- Sunscreen and aloe vera
- Melatonin or other sleep aid (only if you already use these at home-- the airplane is not the place to experiment with taking these for the first time!)
- Electrolyte packets
- Insect repellent -- DEET is highly recommended in jungle areas. Some mosquitoes, unfortunately, seem to pay no attention to natural repellents such as citronella or oils made from soybean and eucalyptus. Bring DEET-based lotion at least as a backup.
- Probiotics (taking a probiotic daily helps reduce the risk of getting traveler's diarrhea as well as to repopulate the good bacteria in your gut after taking antibiotics.)

Basic hygiene:

- Wash your hands every chance you get with anti-bacterial soap. Bring hand sanitizer too! Keep your hands clean and out of your mouth!
- Bring a small supply of your own toilet paper and tissues (in zip lock bags to keep protected and dry).
- To prevent fungal and parasitic infections, keep feet clean and dry, and do not go barefoot.
- Do not “play” in the mud or dirt.

Water and food issues: Traveler’s diarrhea pulls down even the stoutest of travelers eventually and can be very unpleasant. It can be caused by parasites or viruses, but most often it is caused by bacteria carried in food or water. Plenty of other diseases are spread this way, including cholera, hepatitis A, and typhoid. Nothing is more important for you health-wise than thinking carefully about everything you eat and drink.

- Absolutely no wading, swimming, diving, ‘playing’ in any body of water internationally: this includes rivers, lakes, streams, waterfalls, or the ocean. There are too many dangers of injury from various flora or fauna, and from accidents.
- Never, under any circumstances, drink water from a tap.
- Do not run your toothbrush under a tap—use bottled water. Do not use any ice in your drinks.
- Drink only bottled water, bottled soda and water that has been previously boiled. Bring your own reusable, hard plastic bottles to reduce plastic waste. Refill your water bottles at the hotel. Also bring straws if you must drink out of a can. Food should be cooked to piping hot.
- Eat only thoroughly cooked food or fruits and vegetables you have washed and peeled yourself. Remember: boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it.
- Don’t eat food purchased from street vendors.
- Always wash your hands or use hand sanitizer before eating.
- Do not share your water bottle with anyone.
- Don’t eat dairy products unless you know they have been pasteurized.

Diseases:

- Get recommended [vaccinations and immunizations](#) -- where recommended, take anti-malarial drugs.
- Even taking every conceivable precaution, chances are you will get diarrhea. Let the medical staff know immediately, the moment you are experiencing stomach or intestinal discomfort so you can start treatment right away. This kind of diarrhea does not usually get better on its own.
- Don’t handle animals (especially monkeys, dogs, and cats), to avoid bites and serious diseases

- Mosquitoes transmit malaria, yellow fever and dengue, a flu-like disease that is usually not life-threatening. Ticks and smaller insects can also transmit Chagas' disease. With a few simple precautions against insects, you can greatly reduce the risk of exposure to these diseases.
 - a. Wear long pants, long-sleeved shirts, good shoes, and a hat with a bandanna covering the neck. Clothes should preferably be thick enough to prevent mosquitoes from biting through, but that is hard to do in the jungle. Lighter colors, especially white, seem to keep mosquitoes away.
 - b. Spray your clothes with a permethrin-based spray, especially cuffs and sleeves. When arriving at the lodge, spray the mosquito net over your bed with the spray as well and let it dry before sleeping.
 - c. Apply a DEET-based solution when mosquitoes are present. Studies have shown that 20–33 percent DEET lasts for 6–12 hours (less if you are perspiring) and that anything over that strength produces only marginal improvements in protection. DEET is a highly toxic substance, so wash it off the skin as soon as possible. DEET will melt any plastic bag you store it in and will also ruin jewelry.
 - d. Make sure your mosquito bed net is wide enough so that you don't lie against it as you sleep—otherwise the mosquitoes will bite you right through it.

Personal responsibility and health status:

- Let the team Medical Mentor know of any health concerns you have now or on the trip. Any concerns should be explicitly written on the [Youthlinc Medical Information Form](#).
- Bring prescription drugs in their original containers.
- Bring an extra prescription for drugs you MUST take.
- Bring extra pairs of glasses. Contacts are not always feasible.

Accident and injury prevention:

- Wear work gloves and a face mask when doing construction!
- Wear sturdy sneakers and high thick socks when doing construction and walking around town or on dirt roads or off road.
- Follow directions when doing construction activities.

Common sense:

- Stay with the group. Don't wander off by yourself. Use the buddy system and if you are a student participant, always have a designated Mentor with you.
- Do what we have planned for the group and if you (with a group and a Mentor) are going to do something else, let someone in charge know where you are and when you will be back.

Sexuality and relationships:

- Other cultures are very different from American culture including when it comes to relationships between the sexes. While you are very encouraged to make friends, be aware that what you may consider to be merely "friendly" may be misinterpreted. Be friendly, but careful that you are not unconsciously sending the wrong signal.

Alcohol and drugs:

- If you are over 21 and drink alcohol, do so moderately. You are in a foreign country. You don't want to embarrass yourself or the group and you don't want to fall victim to those who may want to take advantage of a drunk tourist.
- Laws regarding illegal drugs are very strict in developing countries. Consider the risk.

Psychological issues:

- You will probably experience some jet lag tiredness. This may make you a little out of sorts. You can protect somewhat against this by making sure you sleep during the flight there.
- You can expect to see some things at Youthlinc international sites that you do not see in the U.S. such as individuals with physical handicaps unlike those we see in America. You may see men or women urinating in public. You may experience pit toilets, flies, filth and garbage in the streets, and other scenes of poverty. You may find these things disturbing.
- You will also encounter some physical inconveniences. You will be hard pressed to find a toilet that functions well or a shower with sufficient pressure or even hot water. There will be many inconveniences (such as a lack of electrical power) & delays that would seem unnecessary in the U.S.
- A Youthlinc experience is demanding both physically and psychologically because of dramatic change in environment and culture, and also because of the intense and busy nature of the service experience. It's best to maintain a positive attitude, take breaks when needed, and tell the Team Leader(s) when you are feeling overwhelmed, stressed, or even homesick.