

Some top tips and places to get more information, from Standard Life Healthcare

More than one in four of us are planning a holiday in the UK this year, and even more – 44 per cent – will be going abroad. This handy factsheet will help you plan for a healthy, happy holiday wherever you go, to enjoy it while you're there, and avoid the holiday blues when you return.

Holidays aren't all about sticking rigidly to your usual daily habits – unless you want to! – so it's a good idea to accept that you'll perhaps be eating and drinking more than usual, and exercising less. We asked 1000 adults recently ⁽¹⁾ about their holidays, and found that some people take work stress on holiday with them, and others find that holidays can cause their own stress, so let us help you take some of the pressure off yourself and have a happy, healthy, relaxing time.

Inside this guide you'll find holiday health tips to help you:

- Before you set off
- During your holiday
- After you return

(1) A sample of 1181 GB adults aged 16-64 were interviewed for Standard Life Healthcare by TNS. Interviewing was conducted by CAWI over the Internet from 6th July – 10th July 2006. The sample has been weighted to represent the adult population of Great Britain aged 16-64.

Before you set off

Holidaying Abroad?

- There are lots of things you need to 'know before you go', and one of the best resources for this sort of information is the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). Visit their website at www.fco.gov.uk/travel and click on the 'Know Before you Go' button to find lots of vital tips. Standard Life Healthcare is one of the Know Before you Go campaign's partners.
- You may need vaccinations, so it's best to find out as early as possible which ones, and what sort of timescale you'll need to allow. The World Health Organisation gives details of the health precautions you need to take at www.who.int/ith/countries/en/
- Don't forget to find out about local medical resources for where you're going, too. Some European countries have a reciprocal arrangement with our NHS, so to get your European Health Insurance Card, go to www.doh.gov.uk and click on the link Health advice for Travellers (the E111 form is no longer in use).
- Make sure you have adequate travel insurance – for example, does yours include repatriation to make sure you get home if you have an accident or are taken ill?

Holidaying in the UK?

- NHS Direct Online offers a search function for GP surgeries around the country. To find those nearest to your holiday destination, go to <http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk> and click on the Local NHS Services link

Wherever you go...

- Crash diets are never a good idea, and turning up on the first day of your holiday tired and listless because you've tried a 'bikini body in three days' plan isn't a good start! One in four 16-24 year olds are likely to take drastic action like this, but in fact if you want to lose weight and tone up for a holiday, then give yourself several weeks to see a noticeable, healthy difference.
- The Department of Health recommends that travellers take out private health insurance. If you don't already have it, shop around – some policies include worldwide travel insurance, and some have health and wellbeing services as well as 24-hour medical and advice lines.
- When you've packed the glamorous swimwear, sparkly sandals, and flip flops, don't forget the sensible shoes... Think of the mundane alongside the fun footwear and you can make the most of healthy walks and hotel gyms.
- Think now about how you'll feel on your return – make a diary note to visit your gym/personal trainer for a post-holiday return to fitness regime, and you won't have to worry about it.

During your holiday

- Don't drop all your good health and wellbeing habits, but don't make them a source of stress, either. People between 25 and 34 are least likely to keep up their exercise when they're away, but it's worth remembering that you have more time on holiday – so it's an ideal opportunity to enjoy a half hour walk rather than get in a cab.
- Some fitness equipment is easy to pack – elastic resistance bands and swim goggles will fit in any old corner of your case. It might be a good idea to take trainers if you're a runner, but don't expect to do 10 miles a day if you're in a desert!
- Beach games are a perfect way of boosting your heart rate and burning off some calories, but do think of safety first. Cut feet and twisted ankles can seriously curtail your dancing – which might be your preferred holiday exercise routine.
- Don't forget your water! Keep a bottle with you and sip from it all the time. There is much more public information around these days about the benefits of water, but it's easy to forget that the combination of heat and alcohol can speed up dehydration.
- Don't overheat. Heatstroke, or sunstroke, is dangerous and will be treated as a medical emergency – so make sure you move into the cool as soon as you can if you start to feel in the slightest bit unwell. And **never** fall asleep in the sun.
- In one in five families with children, at least one adult will get stressed on holiday. Some women believe that could be because the family isn't used to being together all the time. Relaxing together, playing together, or even just agreeing to meet somewhere nice – can all help to de-stress family time together.
- Indulge – but alternate. Having a blow-out meal one night? Balance it with lots of fruit and vegetables the next day and you'll have a healthy average calorie count for the two days, as well as getting plenty of fluid and vital vitamins and minerals.
- Clear your mind. If you know you're going to worry about work – and it seems the younger you are the more likely you are to do so – set aside half an hour to think things through and either deal with them or dismiss them. One in four 16-24 year olds think too much about work while they're on holiday, compared to just one in ten 55 to 64 year olds.

After your return

- Jet-lag is one of the worst aspects of flying home. If all the washing and ironing weren't bad enough, you can feel tired and spaced out for days afterwards. Simple tips to get back on an even keel include getting some early nights, drinking plenty of non-alcoholic fluids, and trying to stick to your usual schedule of eating and sleeping.
- Don't beat yourself up because you've eaten or drunk too much and not exercised enough – you've been on holiday! About two thirds of people under 34 ease back into their exercise regime – but people over 35 are more likely to hit the treadmill at top speed after a fortnight lazing on the beach! Rest is every bit as important as exercise – that's why top athletes value it so highly.
- There are no short cuts to fitness. But overdoing it after a period of inactivity is a sure-fire way of hurting yourself. Either speak to someone qualified at the gym, or just be sensible and start back at about 50 per cent of your original training programme. Pick it up when you feel your fitness returning – it won't take long.
- Keep taking the tablets! Some holiday-related medication needs to be continued, so don't suddenly stop just because you're home. It's vital to carry on with your anti-malaria tablets, for example, and some allergy medications, too.
- Keep an eye on post-holiday illness. Lots of people tend to complain of sore throats or coughs and colds, and put it down to airline air conditioning, but if respiratory or tummy upsets don't go away after a few days it's best to visit your GP to rule out any exotic bugs you might have brought home with you.
- Don't waste your time wishing you were back in Maui, Mauritius or Morecambe – make the most of the psychological benefits of your break and return to work energised, not stressed...
- Book your next holiday!

We hope these tips are helpful in planning, enjoying and benefiting from your holiday. We've prepared this information based on the most appropriate advice available. But we can't be responsible for any consequences of people taking any of the advice or not taking it. So do speak to a doctor before you alter your diet or exercise regime and take time to look up the Department of Health, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and World Health Organisation websites if you can.

Visit us at www.standardlifehealthcare.co.uk again soon. We frequently put new factsheets here on a range of health and wellbeing related subjects. And if you are one of our private medical insurance customers don't forget that you can have 24-hour access to health and wellbeing information over the internet wherever you are – at home, abroad, on holiday or at work.