

**BRIEFING DOCUMENT FOR DECEMBER 2004**

We hope that you found our November briefing on the issues that should be considered when sending employees abroad helpful. As part of your provision for such employees you may wish to consider a training pack, undertaking a personal risk assessment or providing employees with foreign travel kits, including medication and basic equipment.

We hope you find the enclosed “Health Travel Essentials” document useful. Please do not hesitate to use this information as part of a more extensive employee education programme on foreign travel. You may wish to consider incorporating it in your in-house company magazine, on your company intranet or as part of a company leaflet. In addition to assisting employees to remain healthy and safe while travelling, on behalf of the company it is also useful information for employees when taking annual leave, ensuring that they return following their leave safe and healthy from foreign travel.

*On behalf of Preventative Healthcare we would like to wish you a very  
happy Christmas and a healthy and safe New Year.*

## HEALTHY TRAVEL ESSENTIALS

### Miscellaneous Equipment

- Antiseptic wipes for final cleansing of wounds after washing with cooled, boiled water.
- Sterile gauze swabs for swabbing blood and cleaning cuts. Better than cotton wool as there are no wisps to stick to the wound. Can also double up as an eye-pad or as a sterile top dressing to tape over absorbent pads, eg 5cm<sup>2</sup>, 7.5cm<sup>2</sup>, 10cm<sup>2</sup>.
- Sterile, non-stick dressings to tape over cuts, grazes and minor burns, eg 5cm<sup>2</sup>, 10cm<sup>2</sup>.
- Assorted, ready-cut, sterile fabric plasters.
- Crepe bandage – holds dressings in place and doubles up as a light support for sprains and strains, eg 7.5cm x 4.5cm.
- Blunt-ended scissors.
- Thermometer – preferably a digital one.
- Fine tweezers for removing splinters, etc.
- Safety pins.
- Insect repellent for keeping gnats, midges and mosquitoes at bay. Go for waterproof ones containing DEET (diethyltoluamide).
- Insect sting pain-reliever spray. This is also useful for nettle rash, jellyfish stings and as a sunburn reliver. 1% hydrocortisone cream or calamine lotion are suitable alternatives.
- High protection factor sunscreen, preferably waterproof if swimming. Re-apply regularly after drying yourself if swimming or skiing.
- After-sun soothing moisturiser.
- Water purification tablets, unless drinking water is known to be safe (ask the travel agent).

### Medicines

Where possible, opt for tablets or capsules in plastic containers – these are lighter and safer to carry than liquids in glass bottles.

- **Painkillers:** *Adults* : Ibuprofen, Paracetamol or Aspirin.  
*Children* : Paracetamol elixir plus dosing syringe.
- **Diarrhoea:** *Adults* : Anti-diarrhoea tablets, eg Loperamide.  
*Children* : Tablets or sachets for preparing rehydrating electrolyte solutions.
- An adequate supply of any prescribed drugs (eg contraceptive pill, asthma inhalers, etc). Remind patients to write down the generic drug name and carry this separately in case they need further supplies or need to seek medical advice.
- A laxative.



### *Additional items to consider depending on space and circumstances:*

- Travel sickness tablets.
- Clove oil for toothache – advise a dental check-up before prolonged trips abroad.
- Antihistamine tablets for hayfever and allergies.
- Cold sore cream for sufferers whose herpes labialis is triggered by ultra-violet light.
- Antacid tablets.

### How To Avoid Food Poisoning In Risky Areas – ‘Peel It, Cook It, Boil It or Avoid It’

- For drinking, brushing your teeth, preparing food or cooking, use:-
  - Water from sealed bottles. Carbonated is safer than still water as it is less likely to have been filled from the tap.
  - Freshly boiled and cooled water.
  - Water sterilised with purification tablets.
- Eat only fruits that can be peeled.
- Wash hands thoroughly before eating.
- Avoid green salads and uncooked vegetables.
- Avoid ice cubes unless made from safe water.
- Avoid ice creams from unreliable sources.
- Avoid unpasteurised milk – boil if unsure.
- Avoid food exposed to the sun or to flies.
- Avoid snacks bought from roadside vendors.
- Sea, river and swimming pool water may be contaminated – avoid obviously murky areas. Keep your head out of the water, don't dive and try not to swallow any.

### Water And Other Drinks

- Breast fed babies rarely require extra drinks. Freshly boiled and unsweetened water allowed to cool should be offered to thirsty babies, particularly during hot weather.
- Unboiled tap water should not be given to infants under six months of age.
- Water supplies containing high levels of certain materials, such as nitrate, lead and sodium, must not be used. Water supplies in the Winchester, Eastleigh and Andover area are well below the maximum admissible concentrations of these minerals in water, which are:-

Nitrate: 50mg/litre

Lead: 50mcg/litre

Sodium: 150mg/litre

- Bottled and softened waters should not be generally used for infants.
- Bottled waters are not sterile and consequently any bottled water must be boiled before use in preparing formula milks or food for infants under six months.
- Water which has been artificially softened by an installed water softener is not recommended for infant feeding due to its unacceptable high sodium content.

- ❑ Water filter jugs should not be used unless the water is boiled and cooled before use and the manufacturer's instructions are followed as to how often the filter is changed. Otherwise bacteria and their toxins produced in the charcoal filter can contaminate the water.
- ❑ Apple juice should be discouraged in young children with a tendency to diarrhoea.
- ❑ In other countries where the public water is unsuitable the following guidelines should be helpful:-
  - ✓ Buy non-carbonated bottled water.
  - ✓ Check that the seal is intact.
  - ✓ Boil all water which is to be used for infant feeds.
  - ✓ Once opened, bottled water should be kept in a refrigerator.
  - ✓ Sterilise feeding bottles, teats, etc, as usual.
  - ✓ Check the mineral content:- sodium should be less than 20mg/litre, potassium should be less than 20mg/litre, nitrate must be less than 25mg/litre..

Most still bottled mineral waters available on the UK market are suitable (eg Buxton, Chiltern Hills, Evian, Highland Spring Spa, Stretton Hills and Volvic still mineral waters).

