

Dancer Health Tips: Staying Healthy on Tour

When traveling outside the United States and Canada, our systems are vulnerable to unfamiliar bacteria and it is possible to get sick from food borne or hygiene related illnesses. In an effort to keep you healthy while traveling, these tips may assist you. The goal is to keep you well and to avoid spending time seeking out emergency medical care.

Vaccines needed for most travel:

- Tetanus/diphtheria booster
- Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) (if you have not had the diseases or been immunized)
- Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis B series

Please see www.cdc.gov for recommended immunizations for the specific destination

Medications:

Anyone with a reoccurring “issue”: asthma, allergies, ulcers, headaches etc. **must** bring the medications you might need in the event you experience an episode of your medical condition. See your primary care physician and obtain the prescription medications and pain relievers you could require. An athletic trainer or physiotherapist traveling on the trip may not carry these specific medications. Please bring an **EPI pen** if you have allergies which might require one.

In addition, don't forget **dental care**: please do not go on tour with any untreated dental problems.

Informing your medical staff:

Please inform your medical staff of your needs and past medical history prior to leaving.

Traveler's Diarrhea:

Traveler's Diarrhea (TD) can be a serious illness. Most commonly the person is infected with a bacteria through a food or water source, affecting their intestines. This causes diarrhea and vomiting and can lead to dehydration quickly.

Tips to avoid TD are as follows:

- Always wash hands before eating
- Only eat fruit that you have peeled (with clean hands), do not eat uncooked vegetables. Do not eat lettuce or salads.
- Bottled water only should be used in developing countries
- Meats and vegetables should be well cooked
- Food should be served to you hot and on clean dry plates/utensils
- Avoid street food, ice cubes
- Expensive hotels offer no guarantee of safety from TD
- Drink, rinse mouth and brush teeth with bottled water only
- See your primary care doctor or travel clinic for prescription for antibiotics for TD to carry with you
- Bring packages of oral rehydration salts (ORS) with you--ask your doctor, pharmacist or the travel clinic for recommendations

If TD occurs while traveling:

- Take the antibiotics as recommended by your doctor
- Replace the fluids that your body is losing (diarrhea) with plenty of liquids—bottled water mixed with ORS is best
- May need to use local emergency services if not improved or symptoms worsen (increased frequency of diarrhea/vomiting, fever, chills, inability to retain oral fluid)

Tips for Avoiding Jet Lag:

This is major issue, particularly when traveling to Asia or Africa since the body clock is almost exactly reversed and flights are extremely LONG. In addition to this major shift in your circadian rhythms, jet lag is worsened by dehydration and the inactivity of long haul flights.

- Drink water!
- Drink no alcohol on flight: it dehydrates and disrupts sleep. Good to avoid the first few days in new time zone for the same reasons.
- Do get up and stretch and move around the cabin.
- Wear comfortable, nonrestrictive clothing.
- If your feet and ankles tend to swell, wear compression socks or stockings.
- Start sleeping and waking on the new time zone a couple days before departure if possible
- Reset your watch according to your destination's time clock and attempt to adhere to your arrival schedule – the sooner, the better
- Eat sparingly on the flight.
- Sleep aid and/or melatonin may be beneficial the first night of arrival

When emergency care is needed:

If a situation and illness should arise that is out of the scope and care of the traveling training staff or dancer, seek local emergency care. Ask the hotel desk clerk or liason where a hospital would be located with an emergency room. These would be the best equipped to handle any situation if it should arise.

Sources:

www.cdc.org

Traveling Tips, Alvin Ailey Dance Company

Traveling Abroad Guidelines, United States National Soccer Teams

Disclaimer

The information on traveling tips listed above are to help guide and inform the dancer and training staff while traveling, it is not meant to take the place of the advice of a medical professional. This information is provided by Dance/USA Task Force on Dancer Health.