

The time of year has come where many families in Singapore will be travelling overseas to make use of the long June school holidays. In view of the current influenza A H1N1 outbreak, we have compiled the following travelling tips

Travelling Destinations to avoid

It is still advisable to avoid travelling to affected areas, namely:

- Mexico
- USA
- Canada
- Melbourne & the state of Victoria, Australia
- Kobe and Osaka, Japan
- Chile

We should also be mindful that countries in the Southern Hemisphere such as Australia and New Zealand will be in their winter seasons when there may be a surge of influenza activity. Families travelling to countries in the Southern Hemisphere should consider receiving influenza vaccination at least 1 week prior to their travelling.

Vaccination

Influenza vaccination is advisable for all except for babies < 6 months, women in 1st trimester pregnancy and those with history of egg allergy or allergy to previous influenza vaccination.

Health Maintenance during Travelling

Influenza virus spreads via infected droplets from coughing and sneezing and also through contact of contaminated surfaces as the virus can survive for up to 2 days on non-porous surface in cold weather. Maintaining good personal hygiene will go a long way in protecting you and your family from catching the virus. Here are some tips:

Regular hand washing with soap and water (or the use of hand sanitizers)

1. Before and after meals
2. Before and after food preparations
3. Before touching your eyes, nose and mouth with your hands
4. After using the toilets
5. Whenever you think you may have contacted or touched areas that may be contaminated such as public eating areas etc
6. After handling animals or pets

During the peak of influenza epidemic, avoid overcrowded, enclosed places (e.g. cinemas), and swimming pools or spas (these places increase the risk of contact with bodily fluids such as saliva and nasal discharges).

- Eating well cooked dishes as the virus can thrive on uncooked dishes. Avoid sharing of food; use a serving spoon when sharing food dishes with your friends and family.
- Avoid sharing of personal items such as toothbrush, face towels and hand towels

In addition to the above, you should have adequate rest while holidaying overseas. You should consume a healthy intake of fruits and vegetables. Taking adequate fluids daily (about 1.5 to 2 litres) also helps.

Excessive alcohol and smoking should be avoided as they may reduce your body's immunity.

Travelling Kit

In view of the recent flu epidemic, you should also consider bringing along:

- a) Surgical masks or N95 masks in case of an outbreak while travelling
- b) Hand sanitizers to allow frequent cleaning of hands (see above for recommended brands)
- c) Thermometer for measuring of temperature

You can approach major clinics to get a pre-pack travel kits and flu kit with the necessary items.

Travelling Medical Insurance

You should consider taking up travelling insurances for yourself and your family. This allows for medical fee coverage in the event of medical emergencies as health care expenditure in some countries can be very high.

Be Updated and Alert

While travelling and having fun, you should continue to be aware of the situation around the world and the country that you are travelling to. For regular updates on the developments of the influenza A H1N1 epidemic, you can log on to www.moh.gov.sg and <http://www.who.int/en/>

In addition, feel free to approach our staff at The Planet Traveller and ask for our varied range of sanitizers (including the trusted Dettol). Each brand comes with a unique feature.

Eskulin Kids has coloured micro-beads in it to make hygiene fun for children. For a squeaky clean effect, the foamy, No-Rinse hand sanitizer does the trick. For the budget conscious, Cuticura does the work at a fraction of a price.



The Planet Traveller wishes you and your family a very happy and enjoyable holiday.



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