

Tips to Minimize Illness & Injury

Before you leave

1. Immunizations

Please consult your primary care physician and the CDC website for recommendations and updates: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/nicaragua.aspx>

The generally accepted basic immunizations are:

- Hepatitis A series (2 injections)
- Typhoid (oral or injection)
- Tetanus
- Malaria series (oral) need Rx from PCP
- Hepatitis B series (medical personnel)
- Cipro for "Traveler's Diarrhea"

Contact your local Health Department for immunization recommendation and cost.

During your trip

1. Drink plenty of fluids:

****Fluid Requirements:**

On a normal, moderate temperature, inactive day you would lose 1.5 liters (51 ounces) of water through urine production and another 1 liter (34 ounces) through the skin and respiration. So an average person needs 2.5 liters (85 ounces) per day just to replace average losses. (1 liter = 33.8 oz; 12 oz = 1 can of coke) You get some fluids from fruits, vegetables, other beverages and food. Beverages with caffeine or carbonation have a diuretic effect and actually increase daily fluid requirements. Daily maintenance fluid requirements vary between individuals.

- o 150 lb (70 kg) male needs 2.5 - 3.0 L water (85 – 100 ounces)
- o 90 lb (40 Kg) woman needs 2.0 L water (67 ounces)

Here is a simple formula for water requirements:

Weight in pounds / 2 = oz. of water/day

You need *extra* fluids due to the excessive heat and work performed while on your trip.

Here are typical water losses during work or exercise:

1 hour weight lifting = 10 oz.

45 minutes of swimming = 10 oz.

5 mile run = 24 oz.

Bicycling for 1 hour = 30 oz.

Building houses for Project H.O.P.E. in the heat (each hour) = 15-20 oz.

This means you should drink your daily maintenance fluids, plus the additional amounts required, based on your activity level.

****Also, be familiar with the early signs of dehydration**

- Dry, sticky mouth
- Sleepiness or tiredness
- Thirst
- Decreased urine output — eight hours or more without urination for older children and teens; dark colored concentrated urine.
- Few or no tears when crying
- Muscle weakness
- Headache
- Dizziness or lightheadedness

2. *Wash your hands frequently*

Throughout the day you accumulate germs (bacteria and viruses) on your hands from a variety of sources, such as direct contact with people (shaking or holding hands), contaminated surfaces, and foods. If you don't wash your hands frequently enough, you can infect yourself with these germs by touching your eyes, nose or mouth. And you can spread these germs to others by touching them or by touching surfaces that they also touch, such as doorknobs.

- Infectious diseases that are commonly spread through hand-to-hand contact include the common cold, flu and several gastrointestinal disorders, such as infectious diarrhea.

Antibacterial soaps are popular. Regular soap works just fine too. The combination of scrubbing your hands with soap — antibacterial or not — and rinsing them with water loosens and removes bacteria from your hands.

While staying in Nicaragua or Haiti you should:

1. Wash your hands every hour, while interacting with the people in the villages (Keep hand sanitizer in your pocket)
2. Wash your hands 2x per day during working hours (if working with gloves)
3. Avoid touching your mouth, nose, and eyes (unless you have recently washed your hands.)
4. Wash your hands before all meals and after using the restroom

3. *Avoid Insect Bites*

Travelers should protect themselves from mosquito bites by wearing clothing that covers most of the body, and by applying insect repellent to exposed skin, particularly between dusk and dawn.

4. *Avoid Sunburns*

Wear wide brim hats, long sleeve shirts, and use copious amounts of sunscreen.

5. *Avoid going barefoot*

To prevent fungal and parasitic infections, keep feet clean and dry, and do not go barefoot.

6. *Eat Properly Prepared Food and Drinks.*

The food prepared and water supplied at the Project Hope base is safe to eat and drink. However outside the base camp drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water, fountain drinks, and ice cubes. Do not drink water given to you by the locals. Do not share your personal water bottle with others.

- ✓ Don't eat food purchased from street vendors.
- ✓ Don't drink beverages with ice, unless the ice has been made with distilled water.
- ✓ Don't eat dairy products, unless you know they have been pasteurized.

7. *Avoid handling animals in the villages* (especially monkeys, dogs, and cats) to avoid bites and serious diseases.

8. *Don't swim in fresh water.* Salt water is usually safer.

After You Return Home

- ✓ Continue taking your malaria medicine weekly for four weeks after you return home.
- ✓ If you become ill after your trip...even as long as a year after your return...tell your doctor where you have traveled.