

## TRAVEL PRECAUTIONS

### Be Prepared

When you pack, include any medications and other medical supplies you and your family use regularly because they may be hard to find at your destination. Don't forget inhalers, allergy medication, and insulin, if needed. Other items you may want to pack:

- over-the-counter (OTC) pain reliever like acetaminophen
- a small first-aid kit that includes antiseptic, antibiotic ointment, bandages, and other OTC medications your doctor may recommend
- sunscreen
- insect repellent (the most effective ones contain DEET)
- waterless alcohol-based hand rubs for when soap and clean water aren't available

When your family travels and is away from the usual eating and sleeping routines, the chances increase that someone might get sick. It can take time to adjust to the food, water, and air in a new environment, and kids can be especially vulnerable to a variety of travel-related problems, including motion sickness, diarrhea, and infections. But some early planning and smart packing can help you keep the trip healthy for everybody. Here are some things to keep in mind when your family prepares to travel.

Ask your doctor or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website for a list of recommended or required vaccinations (the site includes a section devoted to travelers' health that you can search by destination), and be sure to take your child's immunization records with you if you're traveling internationally.

### Common Travel Troubles

**Ear pain.** It's common for kids to experience ear discomfort during a plane's takeoff and descent caused by pressure in the middle ear as it tries to equalize. Encourage kids to swallow, yawn, or, if they're old enough, chew gum. It may help infants to nurse or suck on a bottle. All of these things can help kids' ears adjust. You may also want to give your child a pain reliever, such as acetaminophen, 30 to 60 minutes before takeoff or, if it's a long flight, prior to landing.

No matter how far you're traveling, there are some health issues that your family is likely to face, including jet lag, ear discomfort, travel (or motion) sickness, and diarrhea.

**Jet lag.** When you fly across time zones, it can take time for your internal body clock to catch up with the local time. For example, if your regular bedtime is 9 p.m., and you travel from New York to California, where the time is 3 hours earlier, you may be ready for bed when it is 6 p.m. in California because you've already been up for the usual amount of time and your body is ready to rest. Chances are you'll probably not go to sleep until the local time is 9 p.m., and then you'll be extra tired because your body has been awake for longer than usual. In addition to tiredness, jet lag can also cause an upset stomach and even insomnia. Here are some steps you can take to help deal with jet lag:

- Try to adjust your family's sleep schedules 2–3 days before departure.
- Dehydration contributes to the side effects of jet lag so make sure everyone drinks plenty of water during the flight. Avoid alcohol, coffee, tea, and other caffeinated beverages.
- Caffeine acts as a diuretic that causes the body to eliminate water (through urination), which may contribute to dehydration.