

Have a healthy holiday



AN IMPROPER DIET, a lapse in your exercise routine and lack of sleep while you are away on vacation can all cause you to return more exhausted than when you left—or even lead to illness. Here are eight tips to ensure you have a safe, relaxing holiday *Article by Lisa Evans*

1. Visit a travel doctor.

International trips mean exposure to unfamiliar ailments. Dr. Gio Miletto, a medical director at the B.C.-wide clinic network of Travel Medicine and Vaccination Centres, advises travellers to make an appointment with a travel doctor before embarking on a foreign journey, to receive necessary immunizations and learn about the health risks of the region you are visiting. Some of the most common immunizations are for traveller's diarrhea, hepatitis A and B, typhoid, yellow fever and sometimes even rabies.

Schedule an appointment as far in advance of your trip as possible in case the necessary immunizations require more than one shot.

2. En route, avoid germs, stay hydrated and step lively.

To ensure you don't pick up something before you land at your destination, it's a good idea to pack a small bottle of hand sanitizer in your carry-on, as well as antiseptic wipes to clean off your tray table, arm rest and any media buttons you may be touching during the flight. Cabin air is dry; avoid dehydration by drinking plenty of water, and avoiding or limiting alcohol and caffeine. Also, to keep blood circulating, get up and walk around periodically.

 **Bad habits while on holiday add up to a pricier vacation; find out why at besthealthmag.ca/novdec2013.**

3. Combat jet lag.

Travel involving time zones confuses your body. "We have a natural circadian rhythm," says Toronto naturopathic doctor Mahalia Freed. "It's an internal sense of what time it is and what we're supposed to do at that time." If you have trouble sleeping, Freed suggests taking a melatonin supplement before bed. You can also boost your melatonin production naturally by practising kundalini yoga breathing, she says. Breathe in through one nostril and out through the other, then reverse it. "This stimulates the pineal gland, which regulates melatonin production."

4. Watch what you eat and drink.

When eating out, make sure that hot foods are hot when served, and cooked thoroughly to kill bacteria and prevent traveller's diarrhea. While it's important to stay hydrated when travelling, Miletto advises taking special precautions when drinking water, depending on your destination. "Avoid ice cubes, and drink bottled water rather than tap. And make sure bottled water is sealed before drinking it. Also avoid salad, as you can't be sure of the quality of the water that was used to wash it," he says. Eat fruit only if you can peel it, and avoid the skins. Consider packing a multivitamin if you're vacationing in an area where fruit and vegetables are in limited supply.



5. Avoid all-inclusive overindulging.

Eating too much makes you feel bloated and sluggish; to avoid this, stave off hunger pangs, says Dr. Yoni Freedhoff, medical director of Ottawa's Bariatric Medical Institute. "We all know that when we go to the supermarket hungry, we buy food we otherwise wouldn't have bought," he says. The same goes for all-inclusives. Eat a breakfast that has at least one source of protein, and snack during the day to minimize hunger. If you are concerned about portion size, Freedhoff suggests choosing a destination that offers à la carte restaurants. "You're less likely to overindulge if you have a fixed menu rather than a buffet you can go back to over and over."

6. Watch your alcohol intake.

"Hangovers are a combination of too much alcohol, not enough water and not enough sleep," says Freed. Manage your alcohol consumption by alternating water with cocktails, but also, says Freed, be conscious of your limits and stick to them. For example, if you know that you can handle two drinks before you feel tipsy, have no more than two drinks. "Alcohol is a toxin, and when we drink it the liver has to prioritize breaking it down over other functions, such as breaking down fat," says Freed. If you do get a hangover, help your body recover: Fuel up on things that promote liver detoxification such as cruciferous vegetables, and water with lemon juice.

7. Be sure to get enough sleep.

While you want to cram as much into your holiday as you can, Freed says doing too much can cause you to return home feeling burnt out. "If you have the type of holiday where you're very active and trying to maximize your time away rather than resting and recharging as well, you will not get enough sleep and you can be vulnerable to infection," she says. Try to stick with your normal sleep schedule, close the drapes to block out light that may disturb you in the early morning, and bring an eye mask so you can have a quick nap during the day.

8. Don't take a break from exercise.

Working out keeps you from packing on the pounds after enjoying decadent meals or the buffet table; it also helps you sleep better, manage jet lag and keep your energy up. Plan for an active vacation by researching fitness activities in the area, downloading fitness videos to your iPad or laptop (for example, Best Health's 10-Minute Tune-ups) or asking hotel staff to recommend interesting, and safe, walking tours of the local area. "A brisk walk for 20 to 30 minutes a day can be included as part of your exploration of a new area," says Miletto. Many hotels cater to health-conscious travellers with fitness facilities and classes, or even yoga on the beach. ❁