
Preparing for Your Trip to The Bahamas

Before visiting The Bahamas, you may need to get the following vaccinations and medications for vaccine-preventable diseases and other diseases you might be at risk for at your destination: (Note: Your doctor or healthcare provider will determine what you will need, depending on factors such as your health and immunization history, areas of the country you will be visiting, and planned activities.)

To have the most benefit, see a health-care provider at least 4-6 weeks before your trip to allow time for your vaccines to take effect.

Even if you have less than 4 weeks before you leave, you should still see a health-care provider for needed vaccines and other medications and information about how to protect yourself from illness and injury while traveling.

CDC recommends that you see a health-care provider who specializes in Travel Medicine. **Find a travel medicine clinic near you.** If you have a medical condition, you should also share your travel plans with any doctors you are currently seeing for other medical reasons. If your travel plans will take you to more than one country during a single trip, be sure to let your health-care provider know so that you can receive the appropriate vaccinations and information for all of your destinations. Long-term travelers, such as those who plan to work or study abroad, may also need additional vaccinations as required by their employer or school.

Although yellow fever is not a disease risk in The Bahamas, the government requires travelers arriving from countries where yellow fever is present to present proof of yellow fever vaccination. If you will be traveling to one of these countries where yellow fever is present before arriving in The Bahamas, this requirement must be taken into consideration.

Be sure your routine vaccinations are up-to-date. Check the links below to see which vaccinations adults and children should get.

Routine vaccines, as they are often called, such as for influenza, chickenpox (or varicella), polio, measles/mumps/rubella (MMR), and diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) are given at all stages of life; see the childhood and adolescent immunization schedule and routine adult immunization schedule.

Routine vaccines are recommended even if you do not travel. Although childhood diseases, such as measles, rarely occur in the United States, they are still common in many parts of the world. A traveler who is not vaccinated would be at risk for infection.

Vaccine-Preventable Diseases

Vaccine recommendations are based on the best available risk information. Please note that the level of risk for vaccine-preventable diseases can change at any time.

Vaccination or Disease

Recommendations or Requirements for Vaccine-Prevention

Routine

Recommended if you are not up-to-date with routine shots such as, measles/mumps/diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine, poliovirus vaccine, etc.

Hepatitis A or immune globulin (IG)

Recommended for all unvaccinated people traveling to or working in countries with hepatitis A virus infection (see map) where exposure might occur through food. Hepatitis A can also occur in travelers to developing countries with "standard" food consumption behaviors.

Hepatitis B

Recommended for all unvaccinated persons traveling to or working in countries endemic HBV transmission (see map), especially those who might be exposed to contact with the local population, or be exposed through medical treatment.

Typhoid

Recommended for all unvaccinated people traveling to or working in the Caribbean villages, or rural areas and staying with friends or relatives where exposure might be a risk.

Rabies vaccination is only recommended for travelers involved in any activities that might bring them into direct contact with bats. These travelers include wildlife professionals, researchers, veterinarians, or adventure travelers visiting areas where bats are commonly found.

Malaria

Areas of The Bahamas with Malaria: Present only in Great Exuma Island.

If you will be visiting an area of The Bahamas with malaria, you will need to discuss with your doctor the best ways for you to avoid getting sick with malaria. Ways to prevent malaria include the following:

- Taking a prescription antimalarial drug
- Using insect repellent and wearing long pants and sleeves to prevent mosquito bites
- Sleeping in air-conditioned or well-screened rooms or using bed nets

All of the following antimalarial drugs are equal options for preventing malaria in The Bahamas: Atovaquone/proguanil, chloroquine, doxycycline, or mefloquine. For information that can help you and your doctor decide which of these drugs would be best for you, please see **Choosing a Drug to Prevent Malaria.**

To find out more information on malaria throughout the world, you can use the [interactive CDC malaria map](#). You can search or browse countries, cities, and place names for more specific malaria risk information and the recommended prevention medicines for that area.

Malaria Contact for Health-Care Providers

For assistance with the diagnosis or management of suspected cases of malaria, call the CDC Malaria Hotline: **770-488-7788** (M-F, 9 am-5 pm, Eastern time). For emergency consultation after hours, call **770-488-7100** and ask to speak with a CDC Malaria Branch clinician.

More Information About Malaria

Malaria is always a serious disease and may be a deadly illness. Humans get malaria from the bite of a mosquito infected with the parasite. Prevent this serious disease by seeing your health-care provider for a prescription antimalarial drug and by protecting yourself against mosquito bites (see below).

Travelers to malaria risk-areas in The Bahamas, including infants, children, and former residents of Bahamas, The, should take one of the antimalarial drugs listed in the box above.

Symptoms

Malaria symptoms may include

- fever
- chills
- sweats
- headache
- body aches
- nausea and vomiting
- fatigue

Malaria symptoms will occur at least 7 to 9 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

Fever in the first week of travel in a malaria-risk area is unlikely to be malaria; however, you should see a doctor right away if you develop a fever during your trip.

Malaria may cause anemia and jaundice. Malaria infections with *Plasmodium falciparum*, if not promptly treated, may cause kidney failure, coma, and death. Despite using the protective measures outlined above, travelers may still develop malaria up to a year after returning from a malarious area. You should see a doctor immediately if you develop a fever anytime during the year following your return and tell the physician of your travel.

Items to Bring with You

Medicines you may need:

- **The prescription medicines you take every day.** Make sure you have enough to last during your trip. Keep them in their original prescription bottles and always in your carry-on luggage. Be sure to follow security guidelines, if the medicines are liquids.
- **Medicine for diarrhea**, usually over-the-counter.

Note: Some drugs available by prescription in the US are illegal in other countries. Check the US Department of State Consular Information Sheets for the country(s) you intend to visit or the embassy or consulate for that country(s). If your medication is not allowed in the country you will be visiting, ask your healthcare provider to write a letter on office stationery stating the medication has been prescribed for you.

Other items you may need:

- Iodine tablets and portable water filters to purify water if bottled water is not available. See **A Guide to Water Filters, A Guide to Commercially-Bottled Water and Other Beverages, and Safe Food and Water** for more detailed information.
- Sunblock and sunglasses for protection from harmful effects of UV sun rays. See **Basic Information about Skin Cancer** for more information.
- Antibacterial hand wipes or alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- To prevent insect/mosquito bites, bring:
 - o Lightweight long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and a hat to wear outside, whenever possible.
 - o Flying-insect spray to help clear rooms of mosquitoes. The product should contain a pyrethroid insecticide; these insecticides quickly kill flying insects, including mosquitoes.

See other suggested over-the-counter medications and first aid items for a **travelers' health kit**.

Note: Check the **Air Travel section** of the **Transportation Security Administration** website for the latest information about airport screening procedures and prohibited items.

Other Diseases Found in the Caribbean

Risk can vary between countries within this region and also within a country; the quality of in-country surveillance also varies.

The following are disease risks that might affect travelers; this is not a complete list of diseases that can be present. Environmental conditions may also change, and up to date information about risk by regions within a country may also not always be available.

Dengue epidemics have occurred on many of the Caribbean islands. Most islands are infested with *Aedes aegypti*, so these places are at risk for introduction of dengue. Protecting yourself against insect bites (see below) will help to prevent this disease.

In 2006, **malaria** (*fa/ciparum*) was confirmed in travelers to Great Exuma, Bahamas, and Kingston, Jamaica, areas where malaria transmission typically does not occur. An outbreak of eosinophilic meningitis caused by *Angiostrongylus cantonensis* occurred in travelers to Jamaica.

Cutaneous larval migrans is a risk for travelers with exposures on beaches and leptospirosis is common in many areas and poses a risk to travelers engaged in recreational freshwater activities. Such activities may include whitewater rafting, kayaking, adventure racing, or hiking. Endemic leptospirosis is reported in Jamaica. Travelers to regions in Jamaica can reduce their risk to leptospirosis by avoiding activities which expose them to contaminated fresh surface water. Outbreaks of ciguatera poisoning, which results from eating toxin-containing reef fish, have occurred on many islands.

Endemic foci of histoplasmosis are found on many Caribbean islands, and outbreaks have occurred in travelers.

Anthrax is hyperendemic in Haiti but has not been reported on most of the other islands. Haiti also has a high incidence rate of tuberculosis and high HIV prevalence rates.

Staying Healthy During Your Trip

Prevent Insect Bites

Many diseases, like dengue, are spread through insect bites. One of the best protections is to prevent insect bites by:

- Using insect repellent (bug spray) with 30%o-50%o DEET. Picaridin, available in 7%o and 15%o concentrations, needs more frequent application. There is less information available on how effective picaridin is at protecting against all of the types of mosquitoes that transmit malaria.
- Wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and a hat outdoors.

For detailed information about insect repellent use, see Insect and Arthropod Protection.

Prevent Animal Bites and Scratches

Direct contact with animals can spread diseases like rabies or cause serious injury or illness. It is important to prevent animal bites and scratches.

- Be sure you are up to date with tetanus vaccination.
- Do not touch or feed any animals, including dogs and cats. Even animals that look like healthy pets can have rabies or other diseases.
- Help children stay safe by supervising them carefully around all animals.
- If you are bitten or scratched, wash the wound well with soap and water and **go a doctor right away**.
- After your trip, be sure to tell your doctor or state health department if you were bitten or scratched during travel.

For more information about rabies and travel see the **Rabies chapter** of the **Yellow Book** or **CDC's Rabies homepage**. For more information about how to protect yourself from other risks related to animals, see Animal-Associated Hazards.

Be Careful about Food and Water

Diseases from food and water are the leading cause of illness in travelers. Follow these tips for safe eating and drinking:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially before eating. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand gel (with at least 60% alcohol).
- Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated (bubbly) drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water, fountain drinks, and ice cubes. If this is not possible, learn how to make water safer to drink.
- Do not eat food purchased from street vendors.
- Make sure food is fully cooked.
- Avoid dairy products, unless you know they have been pasteurized. Diseases from food and water often cause vomiting and diarrhea. Make sure to bring diarrhea medicine with you so that you can treat mild cases yourself.

Avoid Injuries

Car crashes are a leading cause of injury among travelers.

Protect yourself from these injuries by:

- Not Drinking and driving.
- Wearing your seat belt and using car seats or booster seats in the backseat for children.
- Following local traffic laws.
- Wearing helmets when you ride bikes, motorcycles, and motor bikes.
- Not getting on an overloaded bus or mini-bus.
- Hiring a local driver, when possible.
- Avoiding night driving.

Other Health Tips

- To avoid infections such as HIV and viral hepatitis do not share needles for tattoos, body piercing, or injections.
- To reduce the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases always use latex condoms.
- To prevent fungal and parasitic infections, keep feet clean and dry, and do not go barefoot, especially on beaches where animals may have defecated.

After You Return Home

If you are not feeling well, you should see your doctor and mention that you have recently traveled. Also tell your doctor if you were bitten or scratched by an animal while traveling.

Important Note: This document is not a complete medical guide for travelers to this region. Consult with your doctor for specific information related to your needs and your medical history; recommendations may differ for pregnant women, young children, and persons who have chronic medical conditions.

Map Disclaimer - The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on maps do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Approximate border lines for which there may

