



Survival Guide

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Health

While Africa has an impressive selection of tropical diseases, it's more likely you'll get a bout of diarrhoea or a cold than a more exotic malady. Stay up to date with your vaccinations and take basic preventive measures, and you'll be unlikely to succumb to any of the serious health hazards.

BEFORE YOU GO

- » Get a check-up from your dentist and your doctor if you take any regular medication or have a chronic illness, such as high blood pressure or asthma.
- » Organise spare contact lenses and glasses (and take your optical prescription with you).
- » Get a first-aid and medical kit together and arrange necessary vaccinations.
- » Consider registering with the **International Association for Medical Advice to Travellers (IAMAT; www.iamat.org)**, which provides directories of certified doctors.
- » If you'll be spending much time in remote areas (ie anywhere away from capitals and major cities or tourist

centres), consider doing a first-aid course (contact the Red Cross or St John Ambulance) or attending a remote medicine first-aid course, such as that offered by the **Royal Geographical Society** (www.wildernessmedicaltraining.co.uk).

- » Carry medications in their original (labelled) containers. A signed and dated letter from your physician describing all medical conditions and medications, including generic names, is also a good idea.
- » If carrying syringes or needles, be sure to have a physician's letter documenting their medical necessity.

Insurance

Find out in advance whether your insurance plan will make payments directly to providers or will reimburse you later for overseas health expenditures. Most doctors and clinics in the region expect up-front payment in cash.

It's vital to ensure that your travel insurance will cover any emergency transport required to get you at least to Johannesburg (South

Africa), or all the way home, by air and with a medical attendant if necessary.

If your policy requires you to pay first and claim later for medical treatment, be sure to keep all documentation. Some policies ask you to call back (reverse charges) to a centre in your home country where an immediate assessment of your problem is made. Since reverse-charge calls aren't possible in many parts of the region, contact the insurance company before setting off to confirm how best to contact them in an emergency.

Recommended Vaccinations

The **World Health Organization** (www.who.int/en/) recommends that all travellers be covered for diphtheria, tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella and polio, as well as for hepatitis B, regardless of their destination.

According to the **Centers for Disease Control & Prevention** (www.cdc.gov), the following vaccinations are recommended for the region: hepatitis A, hepatitis B, rabies and typhoid, and boosters for tetanus, diphtheria and measles. While a yellow-fever vaccination certificate is not officially required to enter any of the three countries unless you are entering from a yellow-fever infected area, carrying one is advised, and is often requested.

Medical Checklist

Carry a medical and first aid kit, to help yourself in the case of minor illness or injury. Possible items to include:

- » Antibiotics (prescription only), eg ciprofloxacin (Ciproxin) or norfloxacin (Utinor)
- » Antidiarrhoeal drugs (eg loperamide)
- » Acetaminophen (paracetamol) or aspirin