

Suggestions for General Health During Your Time in the Dominican Republic

General

1. Wash hands before eating/drinking anything
2. Drink plenty of water (heat & humidity are intense)
3. Avoid sugary foods and drinks

Vaccines

Start with recommendations from the CDC, your family doctor and/or travel clinic; they will likely recommend vaccines for:

- Typhoid
- Malaria prophylaxis
- Hep A/B
- Tetanus update

Medications to take along

- Antibiotic (for diarrhea with fever)
- Anti-diarrheal
- Motion sickness (Dramamine over the counter, or Ondansetron by prescription)
- Benadryl tablets for bug bites
- Mid to high potency steroid cream for bug bites if prone (need prescription)
- Your everyday meds
- Be careful of any meds (e.g., anti-acne) that interact adversely with sun

Care in the Sun

The sun is much, much stronger in the Caribbean than in the Pacific NW. It can burn your skin quickly, sap energy, and play a role in dehydrating you. Sunscreen is recommended for all participants; if your skin tends to burn easily, it is essential. Environmental Working Group publishes an annual report on non-toxic, sweat- and waterproof sunscreens, and is highly recommended (www.ewg.org) They recommend a sunscreen that blocks both UVA and UVB rays and is at least SPF 30 or greater; avoid sprays (which do not cover well, and can be inhaled), and check for toxic ingredients like oxybenzone.

To be effective, sunscreen must be applied 20 minutes before going out in the sun. A hat keeps sun from beating directly down upon your head, and is highly recommended; sunglasses also recommended.

Insects and Insect-borne illnesses (Bug Repellent & Protective clothing)

Dengue, Malaria, Chikungunya— all can be contracted via mosquito bite. Therefore it's important to take precautions: using insect repellent containing around 25% DEET (such as Deep Woods Off), and wearing long pants (at all times except sleeping) and long-sleeve shirts in the evening. Ankle socks, which give mosquitos room to bite your legs, are not recommended. You will sweat more, but you'll get fewer bites. At the same time, it's important not to get paranoid: we will all get a few bites, inevitably.

Diarrhea

It is likely that you will, at some point, have some gastrointestinal complaint. (Though some people do not, it's best to be prepared.) This could range from constipation (due to the change in diet) to vomiting and diarrhea. If you believe you are getting ill, please contact your chaperones as soon as possible so that they may help you. Don't wait until you get too sick just because you might be embarrassed. It is important to communicate clearly so you can get help early.

Trauma

By far, the most common cause for serious illness overseas is trauma; most commonly motor vehicle accidents. Be extremely careful when walking around the city of Santiago and anywhere else there is traffic; even in the countryside, where there are few vehicles, it's important to take precautions and not assume that the driver sees you. In the Dominican Republic, the pedestrian does NOT have the right of way. Do not ride on motorcycles or animals. Only take transportation that is sponsored by your directors. When riding in a vehicle, keeping your voice at a moderate level helps the driver keep his/her concentration.

(Disclaimer: These are suggestions based on experience, but EAB is not a health organization and is not liable for your decisions to either follow or decline these suggestions.)