



RECEIVING MEDICAL CARE IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Travellers from Canada may access medical care in other countries for different reasons. They may require medical care due to a medical emergency, such as an injury or illness. Injuries are the most common cause of disability and death in travellers. They may also travel to receive specific medical care, known as “medical tourism”, “health tourism” or “medical travel”.

There are risks involved in receiving medical services, elective or not, in other countries, and you are on your own if you decide to do so. It is important to remember that medical practices, health standards and infection control measures in other countries may differ from those in Canada and could result in lower quality medical care.

WHAT IS MEDICAL TOURISM?

“Medical tourism” means travelling to another country to receive medical care. For more information about medical tourism, consult the booklet *Well on Your Way: A Canadian's Guide to Healthy Travel Abroad* on Travel.gc.ca.

It is your responsibility to research the standards of the foreign health care facility and the licensing of the health care provider in your destination country. Find out how the medical services and facilities are accredited and how they are regulated. Verify the licensing of the facility or health professional and study any complaints, comments, reports and evaluations. Even if you research the facility and staff thoroughly, there is no guarantee that what you experience will match the information that you found.

Be aware of the implications of receiving medical care in other countries and be prepared. For example:

- Some countries' medical services may not test blood for blood-borne infections like HIV or hepatitis B. There can also be a risk of acquiring malaria from local blood banks in areas where malaria is present. Avoid injections or blood transfusions except in an emergency.
- Be aware that there are multi-drug resistant bacteria in hospitals and other health care facilities around the world.
- Vulnerable people may be coerced into organ donation without their full consent. As a result, “transplant tourism” and selling organs are illegal in many countries.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Consult a health care provider or visit a travel health clinic preferably six weeks before you travel.

- Pack a travel health kit.
 - While planning your trip, prepare for the possibility that you might require medical care abroad: Get vaccinated against hepatitis B.
 - Avoid injections or blood transfusions, except in an emergency.
- Take out comprehensive health insurance that covers medical procedures in other countries. Your provincial/territorial health card may not cover your health care expenses. For more information about choosing the right travel health insurance for you, consult the booklet *Well on Your Way: A Canadian's Guide to Healthy Travel Abroad*.
- Discuss your medical care plans with your health care provider in Canada before leaving and follow up when you return.
 - Research the follow-up care you will need in Canada after your procedure to ensure it will be available once you return home.
- If you have surgery in another country, discuss the risks of airline travel following surgical care with your health care provider.
- Bring back copies of your medical records to Canada for your health care provider, including information about the medications you received, results of medical tests and a description of the procedure(s) you underwent.
- Be informed about the source of tissues and organs if you are seeking a transplant abroad.
- You should see a health care provider for a medical examination when you return to Canada if you:
 - Suffer from a chronic illness (such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, or a respiratory disease) and notice any changes in your condition.
 - Experience illness when you return home such as fever, persistent diarrhea, jaundice (yellowing of the skin), skin disorders, urinary/genital infection, or vomiting.
 - Were treated for malaria while travelling.

RELATED LINKS

Assistance—sickness or injury while travelling:

www.travel.gc.ca/assistance/emergency-info/sick-injured

If you get sick after travelling:

www.travel.gc.ca/returning/sick