

## Avoiding Illness on the Road

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While traveling, a lack of rest and other stresses wear down your immune system. With flu season in full swing in the U.S. and Western Europe, it is important to take extra precautions against illness when on the road, advises Dr. Phyllis Kozarsky, a travel-health expert for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and a professor of medicine at Emory University. She recently spoke with The Wall Street Journal about how to avoid getting sick while on the go.

**WSJ:** What precautions can business travelers take before leaving?

**Dr. Kozarsky:** A lot of business travelers have to travel imminently, but it's never too late. Even if someone is on their way to the airport to take off for Timbuktu, they can still get vaccinated for something like Hepatitis A, and it can still be protective.

**WSJ:** What about someone who is hopping from one city to the next without time to stop home to see their doctor?

**Dr. Kozarsky:** Come in with an idea of what the next six months to a year might be. It's a very good time for the provider to protect people not only for their upcoming trip, but they can look forward and provide medication or vaccines for [future] trips. You don't want to have a missed opportunity.

**WSJ:** What else can business travelers do to keep healthy?

**Dr. Kozarsky:** A lot of travelers nowadays need to go in and hit the ground running—but if they have the option to go in a day early to get used to the time zone, it is extremely helpful. Jet lag is not something that is easily manageable. Spend as much time as you can outdoors, even if it's cloudy; your biological clock in your brain is manipulated by outdoor light. When people are exhausted and stressed out, they may be more susceptible to illness.

**WSJ:** What are some common ailments to look out for when traveling?

**Dr. Kozarsky:** Traveler's diarrhea certainly is the most common illness that people see, particularly for people who travel to the developing world. We tell business travelers to take medication with them for self-treatment. They should take loperamide (Imodium) and an antibiotic, so that should they develop cramps and diarrhea, they can immediately treat themselves. Make a little travel health kit for yourself—take everything that you might need in the event of a minor illness. Other [common illnesses] include respiratory illness, skin problems, injuries, psychological issues, stress.

**WSJ:** How much of a risk are flu pandemics, such as H1N1?

**Dr. Kozarsky:** I think it certainly is a risk. In the United States and Western Europe right now it is flu season. It is not too late to be vaccinated for either seasonal influenza or the H1N1 flu. We encourage travelers to get vaccinated.

**WSJ:** Do you think the outlook for H1N1 is going to get better or worse in the next year?

**Dr. Kozarsky:** No one knows. Everybody is still trying to figure out what the next two months are going to look like. We had a number of cases in October and then they seemed to go down. We don't know if it's going to go up again, as flu season still has several months to go. Flu season usually goes till the end of March in the northern hemisphere.

**WSJ:** Besides getting vaccinated, what can travelers do to reduce their risk?

**Dr. Kozarsky:** In general, we encourage people to wash their hands more than they usually do. It's not just something we should do after we use the restroom or before we eat—it should be done much more frequently. The best thing to do is carry an alcohol-based sanitizer or hand gel. It's really advisable for travelers to have that available, because when you're traveling, sometimes soap and water is not readily available.

**Write to** Michelle Wu at [michelle.wu@wsj.com](mailto:michelle.wu@wsj.com)