



The Safe Traveler Bulletin

Health information to guide Commonwealth travelers on how to prevent illness for themselves and communities while traveling.



Fall travel tips in this edition of *The Safe Travel Bulletin!*

Welcome! Empower yourself by reading on for five-star tips for a carefree and safe travel experience.

In this issue, we provide a road map for dealing with the unplanned illness while traveling, ensuring food safety at festivals, and the challenge of COVID-19 variants.



New Choice for RSV Protection

We are happy to announce an update to the prevention guidance provided for [respiratory syncytial virus](#) (RSV) in the 2023, Winter edition of *The Safe Traveler Bulletin*.

Vaccines that provide protective antibodies are now available for the prevention of RSV in older adults and infants. Talk to your doctor to see if getting vaccinated might be right for you.

Planning for the Unplanned Illness: Travel Checklist

Whether you are an experienced traveler or planning your first dream vacation, we all hope for smooth journeys. But sometimes, unexpected illnesses or medical emergencies interrupt your trip. Below are tips for preparing for a potential medical emergency while traveling.



Make your health a priority.

- Before making travel plans, research the health risks and safety concerns specific to the [country you're visiting](#).
- When you are sick, you can spread diseases to others. Delay your travel and stay home if you are contagious or if travel would prevent your healing.

Pack smart.

- Prepare a [travel health kit](#) with items you may need, especially those that might be hard to find on your trip.
- Fill your travel health kit with your prescriptions and over-the-counter medicines (enough to last your whole trip, plus a little extra), a first-aid kit, insect repellent, sunscreen (SPF15 or higher), aloe, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, water disinfection tablets, and your health insurance card.

Plan for unexpected health and travel issues.

- Consider buying [travel insurance](#) that covers healthcare and emergency evacuation, especially if going to remote areas.
- If traveling out of the country, make sure you have a plan to get care in case you need it. Check if your health insurance covers medical care abroad—many plans don't!

Prepare for emergencies.

- Leave copies of important travel documents (i.e., itinerary, contact information, credit cards, passport, and proof of school enrollment) at home, in case they are lost.
- Back up emergency contact information in case you lose your phone. Designate an emergency contact in your phone.
- Fill out the emergency contact page inside your passport with the name, address, and telephone number of who to contact.

The International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers (IAMAT)

[Find a list of English-speaking foreign healthcare providers](#) at your next travel destination. IAMAT, a non-profit organization dedicated to travel health, provides health information to prevent illness during travel and manages a global network of doctors committed to helping sick travelers.

The Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)

[Stay Informed. Stay Connected. Stay Safe!](#) Enroll to receive free travel warnings for your destination and also ensure that the US Department of State knows where you are in case you have serious legal, medical, or financial difficulties while traveling. STEP can also help friends and family contact you if there is an emergency at home.

COVID-19 VARIANTS AND INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

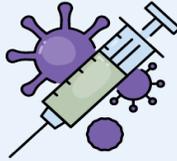
Viruses constantly change through mutation and sometimes these mutations result in a new variant of the virus

Different countries might have more cases of certain COVID-19 variants, which can affect how the virus spreads. Be aware of the variant situation where you're going and check if there are any travel restrictions.



VARIANT IMPACT ON HEALTH

Some variants can cause different symptoms or spread more easily. Depending on which variant is dominant in the area you are traveling to, some hospitals might face challenges that may impact your ability to get treated if you become sick. Stay informed about your destination's specific health risks by checking the [CDC's destinations page](#).



VACCINATION AND VARIANTS

Current vaccines work well at preventing serious illness from variants of the virus that causes COVID-19. Experts expect that success to continue. But there's no way to know how well vaccines will protect you against variants that don't exist yet. [Stay up-to-date](#) and know what variant is circulating in the areas you will be traveling.

PRECAUTIONS AND SAFETY

Choose to spend time in well-ventilated areas, wash your hands often, regularly disinfect shared surfaces, and cough into your arm or sleeve. Know your health risks and ask your doctor when you should wear a mask around others.



Fall Fair and Festival Food

As the autumn breeze sets in, you may be attending some of PA's many fall events. Making sure that you only eat food that is prepared properly is important to keeping you healthy. By following some simple tips for food safety, you can enjoy all the fall flavors without the upset stomach or health risks.



Choose Wisely

When deciding where to get your food, look for clean places with workers wearing gloves or using utensils for food preparation and serving. If possible, check to see if they have alcohol based hand sanitizer or a sink for employees to wash their hands.



Check for Permits

Make sure the food vendors have permits from health authorities. These show that they follow safety rules and get checked regularly. The permits should be easy to see, but you can ask if you don't see one.



Food Temperature Matters

Cold dishes like salads and desserts should be nice and cold, while hot foods should be served really hot. Use the USDA's [minimum internal temperature chart](#). Eat the perishable stuff right away, and don't leave food in the sun, car, or at room temperature for too long.



Go for Cooked Foods

Fully cooked foods are usually the safest at fairs and festivals. Grilled meats, hot dogs, and fried treats can be cooked at high temperatures, which kills bad bacteria. Avoid eating raw or undercooked foods (measure the inside temperature), as they can carry foodborne illnesses.



Keep Clean

Wash your hands really well with soap and warm water, especially before eating. If there's no sink nearby, you can use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Also, try not to touch your face, nose, or mouth to keep the germs away.

Be Careful Around Animals

Washing your hands is super important after petting animals or being near them, even if you didn't touch them. Wash your children's hands, too.



Do not bring pacifiers, bottles, sippy cups, or any other items a child may put in their mouth into areas where animals are present.



If you suspect you've contracted a foodborne illness, call your local health department, or the PA Department of Health at 1-877-HEALTH to talk to a public health nurse, even if you've recovered. Filling out a [food safety-compliant form](#) plays an important role in [preventing foodborne illness](#).