

# HEALTH AND MEDICAL ISSUES

This information is merely a guide. It is important that you seek medical advice from your physician, and to gather your own information on inoculations and other health issues. For comprehensive information, go to the Centers for Disease Control's website: <http://www.cdc.gov/>

This information was given to the teacher participants on the Center for South Asia Fulbright Group Projects Abroad in 2003 and 2005.

## SUGGESTED INOCULATIONS (IN CONSULTATION WITH UW HEALTH SERVICES)

<p><b>First Phase</b> At least 2 months prior to departure</p>	<p><b>Diphtheria-Tetanus:</b> Needed every 10 years. There is currently a national shortage for the Tetanus Immunization. Find out when you had your last shot.</p> <p><b>Polio Booster:</b> Check to see if you need a booster.</p> <p><b>MMR (Measles-Mumps-Rubella):</b> Check to see if you need a booster. You should have had 2 shots after your first birthday.</p> <p><b>Typhoid Vaccine -- oral</b></p> <p><b>Hepatitis B Vaccine shot #1:</b> After the first shot you have to wait one month before getting the second shot.</p>
<p><b>Second Phase</b> One month after 1<sup>st</sup> Hep B shot</p>	<p><b>Hepatitis B Vaccine #2</b></p> <p><b>Havrix-Hepatitis A Vaccine</b></p> <p><b>Meningitis Vaccine</b></p>
<p><b>Third Phase</b> One week before</p>	<p><b>Malaria Tablets-Meflaquine, Lariam or Dexatricosolosis</b> Begin one week before arriving in India.</p>
<p><b>Last Phase</b> Upon return</p>	<p><b>TB Skin Test</b></p> <p><b>Hepatitis B Vaccine– shot #3:</b> depending on your medical providers advice</p>

## PREVENTION

1. **Be particularly careful about drinking water.** During your travels in India the program staff will make sure that you have ample amount of safe drinking water. For the most part you will drink bottled water that is purified and sealed. It is a good idea to bring a good quality water bottle to India so that you can refill with clean water. You will need to carry a bottle of water with you everywhere you go to stay hydrated! Be prepared, however, that finding cold water isn't easy—even in restaurants.\* Some people decide to purchase various water-soluble pills or solutions at camping stores just for extra protection.  
\* Always ask for drinks without ice. You can never be sure what kind of water was used for ice and freezing does not kill bacteria.
2. **Avoid exposed or raw food.** When you're traveling, or even eating in a restaurant or tea/coffee stall, see to it that all the food you eat is hot or has been boiled. Sometimes fried food in tea stalls looks scrumptious. However, often it's food that is cooked in old oil that can cause stomach discomfort. It is best to enjoy the various culinary delights that will surround you – but during your short stay you might consider avoiding raw salads (except at 5-star restaurants), iced-drinks, fruits that are cut on the streets and exposed to insects, and any hard alcohol.
3. **Maintain a balanced diet.** When eating at most restaurants you will be able to order meat dishes (mostly chicken, lamb, and seafood). If you have any dietary constraints please inform the program staff. It is great to eat fresh fruit and vegetables – but best to eat those that have a removable peel so that you won't be so likely to transmit the germs from the outsides to the insides.
4. **Maintain your personal hygiene:** In India much of the eating is done with one's hands. Dirty hands and fingernails are not only considered unattractive, but unclean. South Asians keep their fingernails shortly clipped, and are meticulous about keeping their hands clean. At the hotels where you will be staying, "western toilets" and toilet paper will be available. During your travels however you will be introduced to the "Indian-style toilet." For those who are willing to adopt the South Asian method of going to the toilet, you will learn to rinse yourself off with your left hand, and you will immediately begin to observe the regular left-handed taboos--thorough washing, not eating with the left hand, not shaking someone's hand with your left hand, not giving or accepting things (especially money) with your left hand, etc. Some people bring antibacterial lotion (like Purell), or wipes, for extra measure. Now you can buy these in handy travel size packages to stick in your handbag. It's a good idea when traveling to have a small bar of soap in a zip-lock bag – in case the restaurant or bathroom that you visit doesn't have soap.
5. **See a doctor when you're ill.** There is nothing "heroic" in waiting four or five days to see if you're really sick. Let the program staff know when you're sick. They have established relationships with doctors and clinics that will provide you with excellent medical care.

## **AVAILABILITY OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH CARE IN INDIA**

Health care and cleanliness have improved to meet higher standards, and reduce any risks. Standards are made to secure that all patients (Non-Indian and Indian) receive safe and effective care. The program staff know where there are good doctors and hospitals that they trust with excellent care.

In some situations self-treatment is okay, depending on the patients level of comfort. The prescription drug industry in India is large, so the chances are quite good that you will be able to get any common medicine you need— almost anything is available over-the-counter in India, without a prescription.

**For dysentery** -- bacterial dysenteries are self-resolving

**For Amoebic dysentery** -- Flagyl 500 mg. 3 times a day for 10 days, or Tinidazole (brand name: Tinaba), take as directed on the label.

**For Giardia** -- Flagyl 250 mg. 3 times a day for 5 days

**For respiratory diseases** -- Erythromycin 333 mg. 3 times a day for 7-10 days, or Amoxicillin 500 mg. 3 times a day for 7-10 days.

In India, medicine may have different names than in the U.S.: Paracetamol = Tylenol = Acetaminophen; and Aspro = Dysprin = Aspirin.

Oral rehydration packets are cheap and widely available in India.