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PERFECT ESCAPES!

A photograph of a person's feet hanging from a palm tree trunk. The background is a clear blue sky and a tropical beach scene.

Prevent peril in paradise: The savvy traveler's guide

by AMY ROTHENBERG, ND, DHANP

AS CROCUSES BEGIN TO POKE THEIR HEADS THROUGH THE melting snow and robins start to sing again, many people's thoughts turn toward travel—college students planning for spring breaks, families plotting out summer getaways, individuals dreaming of artists' retreats, and couples anticipating that long overdue romantic escape. Adventures like these are exciting! They get us out of our ruts and give us fresh perspectives on our lives.



I am personally grateful to have had the chance to see much of the world, both for fun and for work, and my grown children have created similar opportunities for themselves. When we travel, I like to pack a small set of natural health supplies to have on hand. True, you're likely to find such supplies at whatever destination is on your boarding pass or plugged into the GPS these days. But when you're injured or not feeling well, who wants to strike out looking for a pharmacy, market, or natural food store to put your hands on a particular item?

Over the years, I've also been privileged to help many a globe-trotting patient prepare for and deal with health-related travel issues. I'd like to share my recommendations with you, too—so tuck this article away somewhere, and pull it out when you're next heading off on a trip!

Change is stressful

All journeys, even travels for pleasure, have their challenges: changes in environment, diet, and schedules can act as stressors that trigger susceptibility to illness. Some people are more susceptible than others. The nervous traveler, for example, who is anxious about her health to begin with, may find that being far from home—or even just in a place that is *not* home—makes her prone to sickness. More robust travelers may also find their systems stressed when exposed to extreme situations or unfamiliar illnesses.

Getting ready to go

Before you even make the travel plans, it's important to understand your own feelings (or those of the person you are trying

to help) about leaving home. We are all hardwired differently. Taking into account a person's underlying temperament (i.e., constitutional type!) as well as past travel experiences will help you plan the kind of trip that best suits the person's needs.

It's especially important not to start a trip tired and stressed—although for many people, that is the norm. I would venture to guess that more couples than not have arguments on the way to the airport! I often encourage patients, especially those going away for a long time, to take a half-day or full-day off from work before a trip. This allows for getting all those little things done: paying bills, cleaning out the refrigerator, packing in a calmer way, and running essential errands. Scheduling a return on a Friday or Saturday with a day or two set aside for “re-entry” is also useful.

Different strokes

For people who fit certain constitutional remedy types like *Calcarea carbonica*, *Arsenicum album*, and *Baryta carbonica*, going away can be excessively stressful.

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Such individuals do not thrive on change and prefer to be home where they know what to expect and can control many aspects of their day. Even so, they can enjoy travel, as long as they have plenty of time in advance to carefully research and get ready. A vacation to the same place each year may be the perfect solution for some of these folks: that way, they'll know what to pack and what they'll find when they get

there. They'll benefit from a change of scenery minus the surprise factors.

In contrast, more easygoing, adventurous people—whose constitutional temperament may more closely fit remedies like *Medorrhinum*, *Sulphur*, *Phosphorus*, or *Tuberculinum*—will thrive on the idea of going away. They might throw a few things in a backpack and off they go. Heck, you can always buy a toothbrush in Nepal! Not sure where to stay when you land in Rome? No worries—that's what travel's all about!

A kit for all reasons

For everyday ailments encountered while traveling, I often turn to preventive natural medicines and commonsense measures (see sidebars). If more support is needed, I use homeopathic remedies, which can be very effective in first-aid and acute situations when prescribed accurately. Handy “travel kits” are available from a number of pharmacies and usually come with a brief “how-to” guide. Or you may prefer to put together your own kit so you can tailor it

to your needs, including remedies that have helped in the past. I always recommend the 30c potency, a good organization system (i.e., labels!), and a container sturdy enough to withstand bumps along the way. [See page 28—ed.]

In my experience, scanning devices at airports have not rendered homeopathic remedies any less effective. If I had a choice, I would check remedies with bag-

gage, but in our family we talk about two types of baggage: carry on and lost! So we rarely check bags anymore.

Homeopathic remedies are sold in many places around the globe, especially Europe, South America, and Asia. You may enjoy a sojourn in those little stores and stalls to see how homeopathy is regarded overseas and how different it may be from your hometown.

Peril in paradise

Carrying an extensive homeopathic kit on a tropical family adventure some years ago turned out to be lifesaving for us. We were camping on the sands of a beautiful little jewel in the British Virgin Islands when our kids were three, four, and six years old. On the first day, our eldest and her little brothers were happily running after hermit crabs and swinging with their papa on the hammocks that dotted the camping area. That evening, we had a sparkling

campfire and lay five in row on the warm sand looking up at the pristine star-studded sky. The night air was intoxicating, and as we carried the kids to bed we felt we'd found our little piece of paradise.

Our usually hale and hearty daughter was very excited to be sleeping in a little screened-in hut right on the water; but a few days into the trip, she did not wake up at the crack of dawn with the others. In fact, by mid-morning, she was still asleep. I went in to get her and found her burning hot and feverish, with extremely cracked lips. When roused, her eyes were glassy, and in an almost imperceptible voice she said: "My head hurts, my neck is stiff. I hurt all over." And then just like that, she fell back into a deep sleep. She had not had too much sun the day before and had gone to bed feeling fine. So we kept an eye on her all day, thinking perhaps she had just overdone it or had a little virus. When we finally got her up and carried her to the



REMEMBER, your main goals are to prevent swelling, keep the blood moving, and as the saying goes, "Sit back, relax, and enjoy the ride!" So consider these ideas the next time you fly.

- Hydrate!
- Take a B-complex vitamin (25-50mg) to help with the stress (even the good stress!) of travel.
- Bring your favorite tea bags. When the beverage cart comes around, ask for your drink *plus* a cup of hot water.
- Hydrate! (again!)
- Get up every hour or two and take a lap up and down the aisle.
- Try progressive relaxation, where you tense up muscles and then let them relax.
- Remember those standing yoga postures (I can be seen on long haul airplane flights in the galley doing Mountain Pose)!
- Use acupressure on your face, or at the risk of really annoying your seat-mates, give yourself foot rubs. Do what it takes to keep circulation moving!
- Bring healthy snacks on board to munch. I often bring carrots, celery, nuts, and fresh or dried fruit. For longer trips, I pack a sandwich or rollup so I know I will be getting at least one good meal on the way.
- If you're worried about germs, bring along a small container of low-chemical hand sanitizer and nice soft tissues!
- A neck pillow and your own small blanket or shawl can be comforting, as many airlines no longer provide these.

Tame your tummy troubles

Here are tips for preventing or treating gastrointestinal troubles *en route*:

- Probiotics, one capsule in the morning, helps create and maintain healthy flora throughout the gut, which also helps to prevent infection (as the stomach is a secondary area of germ-fighting).
- If you think you are heading toward diarrhea, use charcoal capsules or tablets to help absorb bacteria. Charcoal will not absorb nutrients but can interfere with absorption of some medications and oral contraceptives, so check with your health provider first. Charcoal temporarily turns the stool black.
- If you tend to get constipated on the road, bring or seek out instant natural oatmeal and/or packaged ground flax seeds—easy to carry and often just the trick. You can also bring powdered bulking agents like Metamucil® to have with a morning warm drink and lots of water. Staying ahead of constipation is the best approach.

shady part of the beach, she was excessively photophobic and did not want to go near the water; all she wanted to do was sleep.

Meningitis?

When the next day she was no better, a friend and fellow camper walked three miles over a small mountain to the only pay phone on the island and called our daughter's school to see if there were any illnesses going around. The school nurse reported a number of cases of viral meningitis, saying two kids had been hospitalized. Our daughter's high fever, extreme sleepiness, and stiff neck signaled that she probably had it, too.

Viral meningitis is an inflammation of the membranes ("meninges") that enclose the brain and spinal cord. There is no conventional treatment for viral meningitis, just rest, hydration, and waiting. Most people recover well in a week to 10 days—versus the more serious bacterial meningitis that can cause deafness, brain injury, or death—but it's tough to tell the difference without doing a spinal tap. We were an hour boat ride away from an airstrip that could fly us to a hospital. This was one time that my husband and I questioned our choice of family outings! Our daughter seemed to be slipping away, so we began to make plans to get off the island. At the same time, we considered how we might help her with homeopathy.

Not your everyday remedy

Our daughter is one of the most outgoing people you could ever meet, but during this illness, she had pulled inward to the point of being almost unreachable—as close to melancholy as she could be. When a patient has such an extreme shift in temperament as this, we know that they do not need their usual constitutional homeopathic remedy; they need an acute remedy to address their very different symptoms and situation. We had to find a remedy for our daughter's extreme fatigue, photophobia, aversion to company, overall soreness, and dried out mucous membranes. She was barely urinating and had not had a bowel movement that day.

While we considered remedies like *Gelsemium* or *Phosphoric acid*, which may be indicated when someone is feverish and debilitated, it was the *extreme* degree of collapse that seemed most striking about our daughter's condition, and that led us to decide on the remedy *Muriatic acid*. As Clarke describes in his *Materia Medica*: "The tendency 'to slide down to the foot of the bed' was noted by Hahnemann and has been amply confirmed. It indicates an extremely low vital condition. ...unconsciousness... in low types of fever, the patient often slips down toward the foot of the bed, and must be lifted up every little while." This description fit her; the remedy also fit her very dry mouth and cracked lips, her soreness, her headache, and her taciturnity. *Muriatic acid* is not your everyday remedy, but by good fortune, it happened to be in our large travel kit.

Brightness returns

We gave our daughter a dose of *Muriatic acid* 200c. Within a few minutes, she opened her eyes



Soothe sore, stiff joints

For soreness or stiffness in muscles or joints due to a fall or overexertion, try the following, all of which act to decrease inflammation:

- Vitamin C 1000mg 2-3x/day between meals
- Bromelain 500mg 2-3x/day between meals
- Curcumin 500mg 2-3x/day between meals.

Say NO to colds, flu and sinus strife

These natural medicine suggestions may ward off upper respiratory troubles while traveling:

- Vitamin C, 1000mg/day. If you are sick you can go higher (1000mg 3-4x/day). Vitamin C helps create healthy mucous membranes and helps you fight infection.
- Bromelain, 500mg with your vitamin C, helps to thin mucus and decrease inflammation. Very good at first sign of infection.
- Nasal irrigation with a salt water sniff or a neti pot helps to rid nasal passages of infection-causing bacteria and viruses. For a very clear description of how to use a neti pot, go to About.com and type "neti pot" into the search window.
- Charcoal tablets. Sucking on one will help you absorb and flush out any "invaders." (See notes on charcoal under "Tummy troubles" on page 26.)
- Zinc lozenges, which work in two ways: they kill germs on contact and raise the lymphocyte count in the blood to support your own immune system's efforts.
- Ginger tea!



fully for the first time in two days, and with a bit of brightness returning she said, "I'm thirsty." A good sign. Within an hour or so, she ate for the first time, and by the evening, she wanted to be out playing with the other kids. We forced her to lay low to avoid a relapse. Over the next several days, she was weaker than her usual robust self but climbed her way back to health to enjoy the rest of the trip—running up and down the beach chasing and being chased, and riding the little wavelets that came scurrying across the fine white sand.

Traveling with our family of five and another family of three, we had numerous other occasions to pull the kit out that vacation! But *Muriatic acid* 200c pulled our daughter back from the brink of serious illness—and saved us the trauma of evacuating to a local hospital. So that's just

one little story from my personal files about how having the right remedy when far from home can really be helpful!

See you in Virginia!

I wish you safe and enjoyable travels wherever you may be headed! And I hope to see many of you at the Annual Conference this April 9–11 in Alexandria, Virginia—now there's a trip worth taking!

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Amy Rothenberg, ND, DHANP, practices in Enfield, Connecticut. She teaches and writes widely on topics in natural medicine. For further information on the New

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