



# AVIATION MEDICAL

AviationHealth  
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## BULLETIN

Published by aviation health association because  
health and fitness matter to aviators

### Recommended Travel Kit for International Travel

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I frequently get asked by Pilots flying internationally, 'Doc, what would you have in a basic medical kit to deal with common illnesses or minor injuries sustained overseas?' With the understanding that "basic" means first aid measures for initial management of these problems, I have a list of recommended medications and supplies that are good for primary treatment or symptomatic relief of the most commonly encountered medical problems among overseas travelers.

However, before you review this list, you are encouraged to adhere to the following:

1. **Get all medicines and supplies in the United States.** Names for medications differ in other countries, as does their quality and effectiveness.
2. **Put all medications and supplies in a single kit that stays with you.** Your kit is no good to you if luggage is misplaced. You should also re-stock your kit upon return to the U.S. if it was used on a recent trip.
3. **Ground test medications for 24 hours.** If you have not used the medications listed below (all over the counter), try them when you are not scheduled to fly and see if you experience any adverse side-effects for 24 hours after use. On the road is not a good time to find out you are allergic to a medication. All medications listed below are approved by the FAA, so long as they do not adversely impact your operational performance.
4. **Check with your personal physician and "Adults only".** Make sure the medications below will not have interactions with medications that have been prescribed to you or may adversely impact an underlying condition. Further, the dosages listed below are for adults.

Now, as to the contents of a good basic medical kit, understand that the most commonly encountered illnesses among international travelers involve the digestive tract (travelers' diarrhea) followed by the respiratory system. Superficial cuts, insect bites/stings, muscle strains, and allergic skin reactions are the most frequent injuries for the traveler. With that said, my basic kit contains the following:

**Imodium (loperamide) A-D:** For diarrhea take two (2) tablets initially, then one (1) tablet after every loose stool for a maximum of four tablets over a 24-hour period.

**Pepto Bismol (bismuth subsalicylate) tablets:** Again, good for diarrhea. Take two (2) tablets every 30-60 minutes as needed, not to exceed 16 tablets of total dosage. Not only does Pepto-Bismol help with symptoms, it also may stop the growth of the infectious agent causing the diarrhea. However, be prepared that it will turn your stools a dark black color.

**Antacids:** TUMS, Zantac OTC, etc. for those bad meals you may encounter.

**Sudafed (pseudoephedrine) 24 Hour:** Best used in the morning as it can keep you awake at night. A good decongestant for upper respiratory symptoms (colds, allergies). It should not be used if you are hypertensive.

**Mucinex (guaifenesin):** One to two (1-2) tablets every 12 hours for cough and chest congestion, not to exceed four (4) tablets in 24 hours.

**Throat lozenges:** Ricola or the like.

**Non-alcohol disinfectant pads:** After irrigating and cleaning a cut or abrasion with soap and water, use these pads to sanitize the wound. Though these pads do not contain alcohol, they will sting but will not cause damage to the good tissue in the wound.

**Tweezers (TSA permitting):** For splinters and removing debris from wounds.

**Band-aids:** Get a package with a variety of sizes.

**Triple antibiotic ointment:** Typically contains bacitracin, neomycin, and polymyxin B which can be applied to skin wounds (not eyes, lips, tongue) up to three (3) times a day.

**Topical low dose steroid cream (Hydrocortisone):** Good for symptomatic relief of contact dermatitis like poison ivy. Keep away from eyes and mouth.

**Insect repellent and sting/insect bite sticks:** To prevent and then to treat the symptoms of common insect bites.

**Analgesic medication (Tylenol, Motrin, Aleve):** If tolerated, I favor ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) as it helps with pain and reduces inflammation from muscle strains, but it must always be taken with food or milk.

**Digital thermometer:** Helpful in determining if you have something more serious than a typical virus.

**Your personal prescription medications with additional dosages:** Best to keep these medications with you in the medical kit, and carry extra for those unforeseen itinerary changes.

In closing, remember that this is a basic kit that should help in the initial management of the majority of illnesses and injuries encountered on the road. Should your symptoms worsen over 24 hours after these initial measures, seek further medical care. Remember, if you still have symptoms that could compromise your ability to safely operate an aircraft when it is time for your trip, take yourself off the flight until your condition improves and so as not to jeopardize flight safety.