

High-Risk Destinations:

4 Strategies

For Reducing Employees' Health Risks Abroad



Medical risks exist even in developed countries, but **lack of adequate infrastructure** – including access to appropriate healthcare, clean water and sanitation facilities – can transform

many areas into “high-risk” destinations. And, because of employers’ duty of care obligations, **organizations can be financially responsible** for their employees’ international assignments.

According to [On Call International's](#) Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Robert Wheeler, **proactive planning** before departure can significantly reduce exposure to medical risks when business necessitates travel to locations with poor infrastructure. Along with a full service travel assistance provider and comprehensive emergency response plan, Dr. Wheeler says encouraging employees to take the following precautions will help minimize risk.

Did You Know?

“Around the world more than 1 billion people lack access to roads, 1.2 billion do not have safe drinking water, 2.3 billion have no reliable sources of energy, 2.4 billion lack sanitation facilities and 4 billion are without modern communication services.”

– Global Poverty Project

1. Know and Understand Destination-Specific Health Risks.

A travel assistance company like **On Call International** can provide your employees with pre-trip, destination-specific information such as:



- Is there a chance the food and water could be contaminated? If access to potable water is a concern, employees should consider bringing water purification tablets with them. These tablets kill dangerous micro-organisms in water to prevent Cholera, Typhoid, Dysentery and other waterborne diseases.
- Are there prominent infectious diseases that can be prevented by receiving a vaccination in advance? Typhoid is a good example of a serious disease that can be avoided by receiving a vaccine, but employees must receive it at least two weeks before travel to allow the vaccine time to work. Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B and Rabies can also be prevented with a vaccination, and it's generally recommended one receives these vaccines before departing to any destination.
- Are there common insect-borne diseases? A good example is Malaria, which is a mosquito borne disease. There are drugs that can be utilized to prevent Malaria, but your travelers should consider taking the medicine before, during and after travel to reduce the risk of infection.

2. Book an Appointment With a Travel Medicine Specialist.



A good travel physician will discuss medical history and trip itinerary at length and provide the latest information on location-specific health risks, required and recommended immunizations, and also will administer and prescribe immunizations and medications.

Travelers should plan this appointment several weeks in advance of departure since some vaccinations aren't effective immediately, and some vaccines must be given in a series over a period of days or sometimes weeks. To find a travel medicine specialist, visit the [International Society for Travel Medicine's website](http://www.internationaltravelmedicine.com).



3. Bring Your Paperwork.

Create and have your employees complete a Personal Medical Information Form which includes information regarding emergency contacts, health insurance, allergies, drug sensitivities, current medications, etc. They should fill it out prior to departure, make a few copies and keep it with their passports – should they need healthcare, this important information will be readily available.

Travelers with a pre-existing condition should ask for referrals of specialist physicians in their destinations in case they need to be seen while away; a travel assistance company like **On Call International** can provide worldwide medical referrals to travelers and assist them with coordinating appointments if needed.

For employees with prescriptions, encourage them to carry a letter from their doctors describing their medical conditions and medications, including the generic names of prescribed drugs (important because in some countries, prescription drugs might have a different name).

All medications should be left in their original containers and clearly labeled. Employees should also check with the foreign embassies of their destinations to make sure their medications are not banned. For example, Ritalin, Robitussin, Valium, Xanax, and Codeine are banned in the UAE.

4. Know Your Departure Plan.

What is your company's evacuation plan if it becomes medically necessary to get your employees out of the country? It's important to know how to get out of a country, not just how to get into one. All of **On Call International's** clients can rest assured that we can get them out of harm's way no matter where they are located.

And, don't forget: obtaining medical treatment and hospital care abroad can be expensive. US medical insurance is normally not accepted outside of the United States, nor is medical evacuation typically covered under insurance plans. With medical evacuations generally costing upwards of \$50,000, this could put a serious financial strain on your organization. Utilizing an international health insurer along with a full service travel assistance provider like **On Call International** can help prepare your organization in the event an employee experiences a health crisis abroad.



About On Call International.

When traveling, every problem is unique – a medical crisis, a common accident, even a missed flight. But every solution starts with customized corporate care that ensures employees are safe and protected. That's why for nearly 20 years, On Call International has provided fully-customized travel assistance plans protecting millions of travelers, their families, and the companies they work for.

For more information, visit our website: www.oncallinternational.com.

For more information, please contact:

Phone: +1 888.289.0567

E-mail: corporate@oncallinternational.com



**You've heard
the old saying,
"An ounce of
prevention is
worth a pound
of cure."**

**On Call International's
intent is not only to
help your travelers
when they are in
urgent need, but to
help educate them on
ways to avoid urgent
need in the first place.**



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