Going on vacation? Bring these health products with you

Packing light isn’t always easy. Deciding which clothes, shoes, and toiletries get to come along with you on vacation is difficult enough. When it comes to supplements, how can you possibly choose which ones you’re going to need while you’re away? As a local naturopath in Oakville, I’ve tried to take the guesswork out of it for you by compiling this list of health products to bring with you to your next tropical destination.

# Sunscreen

I’m sure you were already packing this anyways, right? Good job! You might want to look into the ingredients in your sunscreen though, as it may contain harmful toxins. Some even contain known carcinogens! You can go to your local health food store and they should have some more natural options (look for brands like Green Beaver and Badger). The good thing about natural sunscreens is that they tend to be more gentle on the skin, hypoallergenic, and biodegradable. Don’t worry, they are also waterproof!

# Aloe vera gel

Okay, so you brought the sunscreen along with you but maybe you missed a spot or forgot to re-apply. Aloe is the perfect remedy for that! Scientific evidence behind using aloe vera for sunburns is lacking, but apart from ice packs there isn’t really any other treatment suggested. This gel is cooling, soothing, and doesn’t really have any side effects, so I say go for it!

# Ginger

Ginger works wonderfully against nausea. Between boat rides, bus rides, and driving on hilly terrain that you may not be used to, motion sickness is definitely a common problem that can pop up when you’re on vacation. I don’t usually have that problem, so I didn’t bring any anti-nausea supplements or medications when I went to Haiti. Big mistake. We took a long bus ride on a bumpy road, and my stomach started to turn. Luckily, one of my travel buddies was well-prepared and supplied me with some ginger – problem solved! You can buy ginger in capsule form, but they also have small chewy ginger candies called Gin-gins that I would highly recommend!

# Digestive enzymes

Eating different types of foods from what your digestive system is used to can throw your body for a loop. If you’re someone who normally avoids certain foods or ingredients, this may not be possible on vacation. That coffee shop in Cuba isn’t going to have a half-sweet lactose-free almond milk latte for you to drink every morning. Restaurants might be cooking with lots of butter and cream, but you’re just going to have to deal with it. This is where digestive enzymes work really well. I always tell my patients to avoid foods that they know they don’t tolerate well, but if you’re in a situation where this isn’t possible, pop an enzyme pill. They usually come in chewable tablet form and delicious flavours like peppermint or chocolate. This is a vacation-only thing though, because you don’t want to be taking these long-term.

# Garlic pills

Garlic is a known antiviral, antibacterial, and antifungal agent. When we travel to new countries, we introduce our bodies to new microspecies that our bodies are unfamiliar with. That’s why we are so prone to getting ill while we are traveling. Eating raw garlic is the best way to get the most out of this plant, but that’s not necessarily pleasant (or practical). Luckily for you, supplement companies have isolated the active ingredient in garlic, called allicin, and offer it in pill form. These are easy to take on the go with you but be warned – your breath and skin may smell like garlic while taking them!

# Electrolytes

Gastroenteritis, more commonly known as travelers’ diarrhea, is a reality that many tourists have to face. Your best bet is to drink only bottled water and to avoid having drinks with ice in them. If you accidentally consume any non-potable water or contract gastroenteritis in some other way, you’ll be happy you brought electrolytes with you. When we vomit or have many loose bowel movements, we lose lots of water. And what do we lose along with that water? That’s right – electrolytes. If too much water and electrolytes are lost, this can put your body into a dangerous situation. There are tons of different brands that carry electrolyte powders and liquids, so pick some up before your flight. You can thank me later!

# Thiamine

Also known as Vitamin B1, thiamine may help to repel mosquitoes. Although evidence for this is only anecdotal, it’s inexpensive and has little to no possible side effects. Might as well give it a try, but also wear bug spray! Mosquitoes carry some nasty diseases (think zika, malaria, and West Nile Virus), so you don’t want to be taking any chances. Thiamine comes in a pill or even patch form and is easy to obtain from your local drug store.

Before taking any supplements or other health products, it’s important to talk to your naturopathic doctor to make sure they won’t interact with your other medications. If you’re planning a vacation, click “Appointment” at the top of the page and book in with Dr. Corina Kibsey, ND to find which supplements would be best for you to take while you’re away.

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