

# *Travel health made simple*

## 1- Preparing for an international assignment



# Expectations

To most people international assignments conjure up ideas of travel, exotic places, vacation, joy, relaxation, good meals, etc.

Leaving for a few weeks of vacation is one thing.

Leaving to live and work for months or years in another country is a totally different story!



# Reality

International assignments can be responsible for a great deal of unexpected:

- Stress or distress
- Uncertainty, anxiety and depression
- Family problems
- Isolation
- Loneliness and boredom

These may even lead to psychosocial and substance abuse problems.



# Information

Preparation is essential before leaving.

Get information concerning:

- Living conditions
- Communications
- Climate
- Customs, culture and religion
- Recreational possibilities
- Political and legal situation
- Existence of security issues
- Local language, food, home comforts
- Problems that may be linked to isolation
  - physical
  - emotional



# Health and Hygiene

Get information concerning:

- Local health and hygiene conditions
- Existing diseases and health hazards
- Doctors and local medical facilities available



# Am I fit to go?

- **See your doctor and dentist before leaving.**
  - Ensure that you are fit to go.
  - Get the required vaccinations.
  - Bring along an ample stock of medication if you have a chronic medical condition (e.g. high blood pressure, diabetes) or are taking the contraceptive pill.
- **Do you have any pre-existing health problems?**
- **If yes, it might be safer to refuse the assignment. Discuss with your doctor.**
- **International assignments are not for everyone!**



# Vaccinations

- Tetanus for everyone.
- For parts of Africa and South America yellow fever is mandatory.
- Recommended vaccinations include:
  - Polio
  - Hepatitis A and B
  - Typhoid
- For certain areas or times of year:
  - Tick borne encephalitis for Eastern Europe and CIS
  - Japanese encephalitis for Southeast Asia
  - Meningitis A & C for West Africa during dry season



# Do not forget!

- Malaria prevention
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Food and water transmitted diseases





# Useful to carry

- An extra pair of eye glasses
- Condoms
- Medication to treat:
  - Fever
  - Headaches
  - Diarrhea
- Disinfectant and small bandages
- Antihistamines for known allergies
- Travel sickness tablets
- In malaria countries – preventive malaria medication, insect repellent, insecticide, bed net



# Conclusion

- Good preparation can prevent and/or mitigate numerous health issues.
- Do not forget to carry:
  - Your vaccination certificate
  - Results of your last medical exam
  - A cell phone with international access
  - Emergency telephone numbers
  - Insurance or assistance company membership number

