

Health Guidelines & Requirements

Master of Arts in Diplomacy and International Relations

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Maintaining good health, safety, and well-being is critical to your successful participation in an SIT Graduate Institute program. Students should always use caution in unfamiliar places and circumstances. To protect your health in Switzerland and South Africa, you need certain pre-departure immunizations followed by reasonable health precautions while in the country. Review these Health Guidelines and Requirements with your health care provider and discuss individual issues such as pre-existing medical problems and allergies to specific drugs. Visit the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (www.cdc.gov/travel) for further country-specific recommendations and requirements.

BRIEF SUMMARY

PRIOR TO DEPARTURE

- Schedule an appointment with your health care provider or a travel medicine clinic at least 8 weeks prior to departure.
- Take an adequate quantity of all your necessary and prescription medications to last your entire stay.
- Ensure you are up to date on all routine vaccines. **Per SIT's requirements, students should be fully vaccinated against covid and receive a booster when eligible.** Discuss your specific travel itinerary (including various in-country locations you plan to visit) with your health care provider and discuss:
 - Recommended vaccines including rabies, typhoid, Tdap booster, hepatitis A & B, and influenza.
 - Prevention and treatment of traveler's diarrhea.

Students should bring a copy of their immunization record and keep with their passport so that it is easily accessible.

WHILE YOU ARE IN SWITZERLAND AND SOUTH AFRICA

- Take measures to prevent traveler's diarrhea.
- Take preventive measures to avoid mosquito bites.
- Do not travel alone and maintain an awareness of your surroundings at all times. Keep in mind that South Africa has the highest rates of sexual assaults in the world.
- Remember motor vehicle accidents remain the biggest risk for international travelers. Ride in the back seat, wear seatbelts, and do not be afraid to ask your driver to slow down.
- Use condoms if you are sexually active.
- While traveling abroad, minimize high-risk behaviors.
- Notify your Program Chair if you become ill.

PREVENTION OF INSECT-BORNE ILLNESS

While we have listed the primary insect-borne illnesses below, other infections are prevalent in South Africa and Switzerland highlighting the importance of personal protective measures.

Insect precautions are recommended for this program. Malaria is not a concern in Durban and Cape Town South Africa and most of the scheduled destinations of the program. However, if you are venturing out to certain districts in Limpopo, Mpumalanga, and KwaZulu-Natal provinces, including Kruger National Park, you must protect yourself!

CDC guidelines suggest that prevention of malaria is possible if you follow personal protective measures carefully as described below and take one of the following antimalarial drugs (listed alphabetically) as directed by your health care provider: atovaquone-proguanil (Malarone), doxycycline, mefloquine, or tafenoquine (Arakoda). G6PD tested is required prior to tafenoquine use.

The selection should be discussed with your physician or health care provider. If, in spite of adherence to these preventive measures, you develop symptoms of malaria, prompt medical attention may lessen the severity of the illness.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE MEASURES

The following insect precautions should be followed, especially after dark, to prevent mosquito bites that may transmit malaria:

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Use mosquito netting over bedding.
- Use insect repellents on bedding and netting. (e.g., permethrin – commonly known as Permanone).
- Use insect repellents on skin and clothing. DEET-containing products (e.g., Off, Off Deep Woods, Jungle Juice, and Muskol) may be used on skin in concentrations up to 30–40% and on clothing in higher concentrations. Permethrin (Permanone) may also be used on clothing.

SIT Study Abroad suggests that if you have further questions, do not hesitate to contact the Malarial Division of CDC at 888-232-3228 for recorded information or visit the CDC website: <http://www.cdc.gov/malaria/travelers/index.html>

PREVENTION OF FOOD-AND WATER-BORNE ILLNESS

Diarrhea-Producing Infections

Food and water standards in Switzerland are similar to those in the United States. “Traveler’s diarrhea” is the most common illness in travelers to South Africa. This is a self-limited diarrhea lasting from a few to several days, characterized by watery, non-bloody bowel movements. Traveler’s diarrhea usually requires no treatment other than fluid replacement. Antidiarrheals such as Imodium or Lomotil may be used in the short term. Pepto Bismol and certain antibiotics (doxycycline, sulfa-TMP, ciprofloxacin) can prevent or attenuate the infection. Antibiotics are indicated for more severe cases of traveler’s diarrhea.

The best way to avoid traveler’s diarrhea and infections is to follow certain do’s and don’ts:

DO WASH your hands scrupulously with non-contaminated water and soap before eating and snacking.

DO DRINK

- Bottled or canned beverages (water, soda, soft drinks) from a trusted source (ensure caps are sealed).
- Hot beverages (coffee, tea).
- Water that has reached a rolling boil for a least one minute at sea level (longer at higher altitudes).

DON’T DRINK

- Tap water, this includes not using it to brush your teeth or using ice made from tap water.

DO USE

- Commercial iodide or tintured liquid iodine to treat water, **ONLY** if bottled water (from a trusted source) is not available and boiling water is not possible. These provide substantial protection when added to tap water. Chlorine in various forms is less reliable than iodine.

DO EAT

- Cooked vegetables, fruits with thick covering (citrus, bananas, and melons).
- Meat or fish that is thoroughly cooked (pork and lamb should be well done).
- Pasteurized dairy products.

DON'T EAT

- Unwashed or unpeeled raw fruits and vegetables.
- Fruits that do not have a thick, disposable outside covering.
- Rare or raw meat, fish, or shellfish.
- Dairy products from small, independent vendors without pasteurizing facilities, including food of any kind that has been left out in the sun, especially custards, creams, and mayonnaise.
- Raw (unpasteurized) milk or milk products. Tuberculosis and brucellosis, both serious diseases are transmitted in this way, so the consumption of unpasteurized milk and milk products should be avoided.

There may be times when refusing an offer of food or beverage, even a drink with ice or avoiding a salad will be considered rude. You must decide for yourself, but polite refusals, thought out in advance, are often handy.

Other Food-And Water-Borne Illnesses

Hepatitis A, cholera, and typhoid fever are commonly spread through contaminated food and water. To protect yourself against serious illness, vaccines are available and effective in prevention along with *strict food and beverage precautions and hygiene measures*.

A note on swimming: Avoid swimming or wading in fresh water. Schistosomiasis (Bilharzia) and other parasites and bacteria live in fresh water and can cause serious illness. Properly chlorinated pools and saltwater are safe from infectious diseases.

OTHER DISEASES

Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is a serious and often chronic viral infection of the liver acquired most often from contact with infected blood, sexual contact, or skin-to-skin contact of mutual open cuts and sores. Appropriate precautions to avoid these types of exposure are necessary, this includes avoiding getting tattoos, or ear/body piercings and avoiding cuddling children with sores or draining insect bites.

HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is a concern worldwide. The HIV virus is transmitted by way of bodily fluids from an infected person and is spread by having anal or vaginal sex or sharing drug injection equipment with a person who has HIV. AIDS is an acquired immune deficiency that can result in life-threatening infections and is the most advanced stage of the HIV infection. It is the student's responsibility to protect him /herself from acquiring the disease through sexual transmission. Other potential routes of infected blood transmission such as tattooing, body piercing, and needle sharing must be avoided.

Rabies

Rabies is a viral and uniformly fatal disease caused by animal bites (especially dogs and bats). Risks occur in South Africa and therefore you should take measures to prevent it:

- Consider pre-exposure immunization (if available).
- Avoid bites from all animals and especially avoid handling or feeding puppies, kittens, monkeys, or other animals. They can have rabies before it is obvious.
- If bitten or have had direct contact with the saliva of a suspected rabid animal, immediately wash the affected area with a soap solution and running water thoroughly to neutralize and to rinse out the virus. ***Then proceed immediately for post-exposure treatment.***
- If possible, the animal should be captured and kept under cautious surveillance until the diagnosis and therapy are completed. If capture is not possible, a clear description of the animal and the circumstance of contact should be carefully recorded.

Tuberculosis

Tuberculosis (TB) is a bacterial disease spread by airborne droplets from a person with untreated pulmonary TB or by ingestion of TB-contaminated unpasteurized milk products. Transmission is more likely in conditions of crowding and poverty. A TB test can indicate prior exposure to tuberculosis and is recommended prior to travel. A repeat test is also recommended after returning to the US even if the pre-departure test was negative.

Coronavirus COVID-19

COVID-19 is a respiratory virus that is spread through direct contact with an infected person as well as through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Symptoms of COVID-19 may appear **2-14 days after exposure** and may include fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore muscle or body aches, sore throat, vomiting and diarrhea. **The best way to protect yourself is to obtain the COVID-19 vaccine and booster and to continue to follow COVID-19 precaution:**

- **Clean your hands often**-wash your hands carefully and frequently with soap and water. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- **Wear a facemask**, especially when you are around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle) and before you enter a healthcare provider's office.
- **Avoid close contact**. Put at least six feet distance between yourself and other people if possible.
- **Clean AND disinfect** frequently touched surfaces daily.
- **Inform your program chair immediately** if you have a pulmonary disease or any respiratory illness; have a fever or feeling sick; if you have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19.
- **Contact ISOS and a health care provider** if you develop symptoms.
- **Avoid travel if you are sick or have a fever**. Your program chair will make appropriate accommodations for students who are ill.
- **Most importantly, stay connected**: SIT continues to update its contingency and evacuation plans to ensure that we are prepared to take appropriate action in the event of a change in circumstances.

Please note: Students should check the country's consular website for up-to-date information on entry and exit requirements.

Sun Exposure

SIT Graduate Institute recommends the use of sunglasses, wide-brimmed hats, sunscreen lotions, and lip protection to reduce problems related to sun exposure.

With reasonable attention to health and hygiene rules, your stay in the Global Masters' program should be a healthy one. Aside from minor ailments due to adjustments to the new food, water and climate, the large majority of SIT Graduate students remain healthy throughout their semester. We do, however, recommend you see your health care provider when you return to the US to test for any possible lingering infection contracted overseas.