



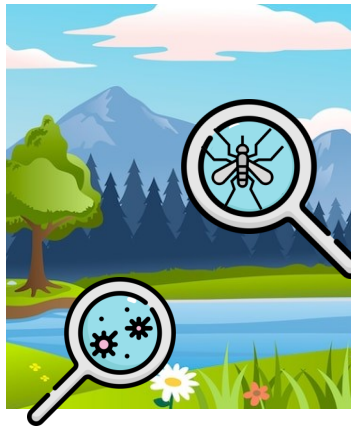
The Safe Traveler Bulletin

Health information to guide Commonwealth travelers on how to prevent illness for themselves and communities while traveling.

Summer is Prime Travel Time!

As you plan your summer trips and outdoor adventures, take the time to gather travel information from trusted sources.

Water safety means more than using flotation devices, it also means knowing how to protect yourself from freshwater germs and mosquitoes. This issue of *The Safe Traveler Bulletin* is filled with five-star health tips to help keep your staycation or international experience disease free and filled with happy memories.



COVID-19 Emergency Ended

The COVID-19 vaccine requirements for federal employees, contractors, and foreign international travelers arriving in the U.S. ended on May 11.

The expiration of the Public Health Emergency declaration does not mean the virus is gone. The best defense against COVID-19 remains getting vaccinated and continuing basic health and hygiene practices, like handwashing, staying home when sick, and avoiding contact with people who have suspected or confirmed COVID-19.

Don't Be A Mosquito Snack!

Your chances of getting sick from mosquito bites increase during the summer travel months (April-September) when mosquitoes are most active. Mosquito-borne diseases can take place when a mosquito is infected with a virus or parasite. Only certain species of mosquitos spread germs and not everyone who gets bitten by an infected mosquito will get sick. Most cases are mild in the U.S., often with no symptoms. However it's important to know that sometimes mosquito bites can be dangerous and have long-lasting effects on your health.

Having a staycation this year? One of the most common mosquito-borne diseases in PA is called West Nile virus. Other diseases like dengue, chikungunya, and Zika virus have also happened in US states (Florida, Hawaii, and Texas) and territories (Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands).

If you do get sick, the symptoms usually show up within a few days to 2 weeks after the mosquito bite. Some symptoms to look for are having a fever, chills, headache, rash, muscle aches, throwing up, having diarrhea, or feeling tired.

Krystal Mason, with the Pennsylvania Department of Health, monitors mosquito-borne diseases. She advises people who are traveling to warm, tropical places to be ready to prevent mosquito bites, especially in countries outside of the U.S. where mosquito diseases are more easily spread.

While traveling, make sure to use insect repellent that is registered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). When used as directed, these repellents have been proven to be safe and effective, even for pregnant or breastfeeding people.

Mason suggests wearing insect repellent, long-sleeved shirts, and long pants, and treating clothes and gear with 0.5% permethrin.

It's also a good idea to choose a hotel or place to stay that has air conditioning or windows and doors with screens. If you're sleeping outside or there are no screens, be prepared to use a mosquito net and try to get rid of any standing water by dumping or draining any containers where mosquitoes may have laid their eggs.

Using insect repellent is key. Some diseases like yellow fever and malaria can be prevented with vaccines or medication. Other diseases like Zika and West Nile, can only be prevented by blocking mosquito bites since there is no vaccine.

Your destination and activities determine what steps you need to take to protect yourself.

[Check CDC Destinations pages](#) to see what vaccines or medicines you may need or if health risks are a concern at your destination.



Pro Tip: Apply EPA-registered insect repellent when spending time outside and dress in long sleeves and pants when possible.

For more information on mosquito-borne illnesses visit

[Mosquito Diseases \(pa.gov\)](#)

[Repellents: Protection against Mosquitoes, Ticks and Other Arthropods | US EPA](#)

[West Nile: What is Pennsylvania doing?](#)

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Learn about the freshwater areas you plan to visit and the diseases that might be there.

If you have any cuts or scrapes on your body, wait until they're all healed before going into freshwater or wet soil. If you can't wait, cover them with waterproof bandages.



If you know you will be in freshwater or wet soil, talk to a doctor. They can tell you about medicine that might help prevent disease.

When you're in freshwater, don't go underwater or drink the water.



When you're near water or mud, wear protective clothing and shoes. Don't walk barefoot.



If you've been in contact with freshwater or wet soil, wash your hands and face with soap and water.



Dive into Summer Safely: Protecting Your Health in Lakes and Rivers

Water activities can provide a welcome relief from the heat, but it's important to be aware that they can also pose risks to our health. Certain waterborne parasites and infections, such as schistosomiasis and leptospirosis, can be lurking beneath the surface. Let's learn more about them and find out how to stay healthy while having fun in the water during summer travels.

A disease named leptospirosis is caused by a bacteria that is spread through the urine of infected animals and can get into water or soil. Leptospirosis can happen anywhere in the world, but it's more common in warm places with lots of rain, like tropical areas. People who enjoy outdoor activities like swimming, kayaking, rafting, or hiking in freshwater areas are at a higher risk of getting leptospirosis. The bacteria can enter the body through the eyes, nose, mouth, or cuts on our skin.

Symptoms of leptospirosis can show up between two days to four weeks after being in contact with the bacteria. Most of the time, the symptoms are like having a mild flu or no symptoms at all. But in serious cases, it can cause damage to our liver, lungs, heart, and kidneys and even lead to death. If you have been in freshwater or wet soil and have symptoms, you should see a doctor as soon as possible. They can give you antibiotics to help make the symptoms less severe.

When traveling internationally, another condition to watch out for is schistosomiasis, an infection caused by a tiny worm that lives in certain freshwater snails. These worms can be found in rivers, lakes, and dams in different parts of the world, like Africa, the Middle East, South America, and parts of Asia. It can enter a person's body through the skin when wading or swimming in contaminated freshwater.

Early signs of schistosomiasis may include small, itchy red bumps on the skin. After a few weeks, some people develop a fever, chills, cough, and body aches. If you have been to places where schistosomiasis is common and have been in freshwater, it's important to tell a doctor about your trip. They can give you medicine to treat the infection, but prevention is key.

To stay safe, avoiding paddling, swimming, or washing in freshwater is best. Instead, try swimming in the ocean or in swimming pools that have been treated with chlorine. If you're going to drink water, make sure to boil it or use a filter to remove any parasites.

Be cautious around people trying to sell medicines that claim to treat or prevent schistosomiasis. Some of them might not work or be harmful. It's always better to get information about water safety from reliable sources.



Contact the Bureau of Epidemiology

Sign up to receive the quarterly Safe Travel Bulletin or to give topic ideas ra-pwsafetravel@pa.gov.

