



Pharmacists Erica Shearer and Suzie Pilon head up the Travel Health division at Medical Arts Pharmacy.

## Travelling overseas? Before you depart, call Medical Arts

Let's face it. Nobody wants to get sick or injured overseas. Yet according to a report published in the New England Journal of Medicine, between 20 and 70 per cent of international travellers report having had a travel-related illness.

"It's very satisfying to help prepare travellers because some of the world's most beautiful places have health risks," says Erica Shearer, one of the travel health pharmacists at Medical Arts.

"For example, in North America we're not overly concerned about rabies due to the success of animal vaccination. But there are many places in the world where rabies – a disease that can be fatal – is still common. So, if someone's travelling to any of the world's hot spots for rabies, I always explain that avoiding contact with dogs and other kinds of wildlife is important, as

well as what to do if a person is scratched or bitten."

Medical Arts offers a structured approach to anyone who makes a travel health appointment. Generally, it means reviewing a person's health status and investigating the infectious and non-infectious risks they might encounter.

"It's not all about vaccines," Erica says. "There are numerous environmental factors that pose risks, such as contaminated food and water, disease-carrying mosquitoes or over exposure to the sun."

Erica also stresses the importance of carrying adequate quantities of one's prescription medication, printed lists of the medication and packing strategically.

"Unfortunately, bags do get lost, flights

do get cancelled and refrigerators can fail."

In the broader picture of current or emerging infectious diseases (consider Zika), protecting the health of travellers also means safeguarding the health of the communities to which they return.

Anyone planning overseas travel can make an appointment but should do so at least six weeks before departure.



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