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Can I travel to other countries if I am HIV positive?



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Maybe. Before you decide, you need to get answers to the following questions:

- Are there regulations or entry restrictions for people who are HIV-positive in the country to which you are travelling?
- What are the personal health risks involved?
- Is it safe for you to receive the required vaccinations?
- Will there be medical care available if you need it?

What countries have regulations or entry restrictions for people who are HIV positive?

The list of countries with regulations and restrictions keeps changing—and so do their rules. Health Canada and the U.S. State Department provide some information, but you should also contact each country's embassy directly.

More and more countries require foreigners to be tested for HIV prior to entry. Some countries do not accept HIV test results unless the tests were done in their own country. Contact the embassy for detailed information about HIV testing requirements and paperwork.

Even in countries that do not have entry restrictions for people who are HIV positive, you may still experience problems at the border—or be denied entry—if they see your medications or find out you are HIV positive.

If I am HIV positive, how will travelling affect my health?

To answer this question, you should consult your doctor or go to a specialized travel clinic. Health Canada can provide a list of travel clinics across the country. You should get information as far in advance of your trip as possible.

Specific health risks depend on the country. In some countries, HIV positive travelers may be more vulnerable to opportunistic diseases, such as tuberculosis and malaria. Traveller's diarrhea, a common problem for travellers in many countries, could be more serious for someone who is HIV positive.

Are travel vaccinations safe if I am HIV positive?

Vaccination requirements will vary, depending on where you are going. Health Canada can provide information about recommended immunizations for travel outside of the country. Discuss these requirements with your doctor or go to a specialized travel clinic.

In general, people living with HIV or AIDS should avoid “live” vaccines. Live vaccines can actually make a person living with HIV or AIDS sick with the germ that causes the illness instead of protecting them against it. Depending on the disease that the vaccine is for, you may be able to get an inactivated or killed vaccine instead. Killed vaccines, however, may not provide as much protection if your immune system is severely weakened by HIV. If a live vaccine is the only option, you may be able to get a medical certificate that exempts you from certain vaccinations. Take all vaccination certificates with you to show at the border if necessary.

If I am HIV positive, what other steps can I take to protect my health when I travel?

Be prepared! Talk to your doctor about:

- taking extra steps to avoid risks like mosquito bites or contaminated water, and
- taking medicine beforehand (or with you) to prevent or treat certain conditions.

Consider whether or not you will have access to refrigeration for your medication, what medical services will be available, and what amount of medical travel insurance makes sense.

For more information, contact your local AIDS service organization or health care practitioner.

For more copies of this fact sheet or other documents on HIV/AIDS, contact the Canadian HIV/AIDS Clearinghouse, 400-1565 Carling Avenue, Ottawa, ON K1Z 8R1
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For more information on HIV/AIDS or for local services, contact: