Health Information for Travelers to South Korea
Traveler View

Vaccines and Medicines

Check the vaccines and medicines list and visit your doctor (ideally, 4-6 weeks) before your trip to get vaccines or medicines you may need.

Find Out Why

All travelers

You should be up to date on routine vaccinations while traveling to any destination. Some vaccines may also be required for travel.

Routine vaccines (/travel/diseases/routine/destination/south-korea)

Make sure you are up-to-date on routine vaccines before every trip. These vaccines include measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis vaccine, varicella (chickenpox) vaccine, polio vaccine, and your yearly flu shot.

Most travelers

Get travel vaccines and medicines because there is a risk of these diseases in the country you are visiting.

Hepatitis A (/travel/diseases/hepatitis-a/destination/south-korea)

CDC recommends this vaccine because you can get hepatitis A through contaminated
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disease</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Typhoid</td>
<td>You can get typhoid through contaminated food or water in South Korea. CDC recommends this vaccine for most travelers, especially if you are staying with friends or relatives, visiting smaller cities or rural areas, or if you are an adventurous eater.</td>
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**Some travelers**

Ask your doctor what vaccines and medicines you need based on where you are going, how long you are staying, what you will be doing, and if you are traveling from a country other than the US.

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<td>Hepatitis B</td>
<td>You can get hepatitis B through sexual contact, contaminated needles, and blood products, so CDC recommends this vaccine if you might have sex with a new partner, get a tattoo or piercing, or have any medical procedures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Japanese Encephalitis</td>
<td>You may need this vaccine if your trip will last more than a month, depending on where you are going in South Korea and what time of year you are traveling. You should also consider this vaccine if you plan to visit rural areas in South Korea or will be spending a lot of time outdoors, even for trips shorter than a month. Your doctor can help you decide if this vaccine is right for you based on your travel plans. See more in-depth information on Japanese encephalitis in South Korea.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malaria</td>
<td>When traveling in South Korea, you should avoid mosquito bites to prevent malaria. You may need to take prescription medicine before, during, and after your trip to prevent malaria, depending on your travel plans, such as where you are going, when you are traveling, and if you are spending a lot of time outdoors or sleeping outside. Talk to your doctor about how you can prevent malaria while traveling. For more information on malaria in South Korea, see malaria in South Korea.</td>
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</table>
Rabies
(/travel/diseases/rabies/destination/south-korea)

Although rabies can be found in dogs, bats, and other mammals in South Korea, it is not a major risk to most travelers. CDC recommends this vaccine only for these groups:

- Travelers involved in outdoor and other activities in remote areas that put them at risk for animal bites (such as adventure travel and caving).
- People who will be working with or around animals (such as veterinarians, wildlife professionals, and researchers).
- People who are taking long trips or moving to remote areas in South Korea
- Children, because they tend to play with animals, might not report bites, and are more likely to have animal bites on their head and neck.

Key

- Get vaccinated
- Eat and drink safely
- Keep away from animals
- Avoid sharing body fluids
- Take antimalarial meds
- Prevent bug bites
- Reduce your exposure to germs
- Avoid non-sterile medical or cosmetic equipment

Stay Healthy and Safe

Learn actions you can take to stay healthy and safe on your trip. Vaccines cannot protect you from many diseases in South Korea, so your behaviors are important.

Eat and drink safely

Food and water standards in South Korea are similar to those in the United States. Most travelers do not need to take special food or water precautions beyond what they normally do at home.

Prevent bug bites

Although South Korea is an industrialized country, bug bites here can still spread diseases. Just as you would in the United States, try to avoid bug bites while spending time outside or in wooded areas.

What can I do to prevent bug bites?
- Cover exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and hats.
- Use an appropriate insect repellent (see below).
- Consider using permethrin-treated clothing and gear if spending a lot of time outside. Do not use permethrin directly on skin.

What type of insect repellent should I use?

- **FOR PROTECTION AGAINST TICKS AND MOSQUITOES:** Use a repellent that contains 20% or more DEET for protection that lasts up to several hours.
- **FOR PROTECTION AGAINST MOSQUITOES ONLY:** Products with one of the following active ingredients can also help prevent mosquito bites. Higher percentages of active ingredient provide longer protection.
  - DEET ([http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/factsheets/chemicals/deet.htm](http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/factsheets/chemicals/deet.htm)) ([http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html](http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html))
  - Picaridin (also known as KBR 3023, Bayrepel, and icaridin)
  - Oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE) or PMD
  - IR3535
- Always use insect repellent as directed.

What should I do if I am bitten by bugs?

- Avoid scratching bug bites, and apply hydrocortisone cream or calamine lotion to reduce the itching.
- Check your entire body for ticks after outdoor activity. Be sure to remove ticks ([http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/removing_a_tick.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/removing_a_tick.html)) properly.

What can I do to avoid bed bugs?

Although bed bugs do not carry disease, they are an annoyance. See our information page about avoiding bug bites ([/travel/page/avoid-bug-bites](/travel/page/avoid-bug-bites)) for some easy tips to avoid them. For more information on bed bugs, see Bed Bugs ([http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/bedbugs/](http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/bedbugs/)).

For more detailed information on avoiding bug bites, see Avoid Bug Bites ([/travel/page/avoid-bug-bites](/travel/page/avoid-bug-bites)).

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**Stay safe outdoors**

**Keep away from animals**

**Reduce your exposure to germs**

Follow these tips to avoid getting sick or spreading illness to others while traveling:

- Wash your hands often, especially before eating.
- If soap and water aren’t available, clean hands with hand sanitizer (containing at least 60% alcohol).
- Don’t touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. If you need to touch your face, make sure your hands are clean.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
Try to avoid contact with people who are sick.
If you are sick, stay home or in your hotel room, unless you need medical care.

Avoid sharing body fluids

Diseases such as HIV infection can be spread through body fluids, such as saliva, blood, vomit, and semen.

Protect yourself:

- Use latex condoms correctly.
- Do not inject drugs.
- Limit alcohol consumption. People take more risks when intoxicated.
- Do not share needles or any devices that can break the skin. That includes needles for tattoos, piercings, and acupuncture.
- If you receive medical or dental care, make sure the equipment is disinfected or sanitized.

Know how to get medical care while traveling

Plan for how you will get health care during your trip, should the need arise:

- Carry a list of local doctors and hospitals
- Review your health insurance plan to determine what medical services it would cover during your trip. Consider purchasing travel health and medical evacuation insurance for things your regular insurance will not cover.
- Carry a card that identifies, in the local language, your blood type, chronic conditions or serious allergies, and the generic names of any medicines you take.
- Bring copies of your prescriptions for medicine and for eye glasses and contact lenses.
- Some prescription drugs may be illegal in other countries. Call South Korea’s embassy (http://www.state.gov/s/cpr/rls/dpl/32122.htm) to verify that all of your prescription(s) are legal to bring with you.
- Bring all the medicines (including over-the-counter medicines) you think you might need during your trip, including extra in case of travel delays. Ask your doctor to help you get prescriptions filled early if you need to.

Many foreign hospitals and clinics are accredited by the Joint Commission International. A list of accredited facilities is available at their website (www.jointcommissioninternational.org (http://www.jointcommissioninternational.org) (http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html)).

Malaria is a risk in some parts of South Korea. If you are going to a risk area, fill your malaria prescription before you leave, and take enough with you for the entire length of your trip. Follow your doctor’s instructions for taking the pills; some need to be started before you leave.

Select safe transportation
Motor vehicle crashes are the #1 killer of healthy US citizens in foreign countries.

**Walking**
Be smart when you are traveling on foot.

- Use sidewalks and marked crosswalks.
- Pay attention to the traffic around you, especially in crowded areas.
- Remember, people on foot do not always have the right of way in other countries.

**Riding/Driving**
Choose a safe vehicle.

- Choose official taxis or public transportation, such as trains and buses.
- Make sure there are seatbelts.
- Avoid overcrowded, overloaded, top-heavy buses and minivans.
- Avoid riding on motorcycles or motorbikes, especially motorbike taxis. (Many crashes are caused by inexperienced motorbike drivers.)
- Choose newer vehicles—they may have more safety features, such as airbags, and be more reliable.
- Choose larger vehicles, which may provide more protection in crashes.

Think about the driver.

- Do not drive after drinking alcohol or ride with someone who has been drinking.
- Consider hiring a licensed, trained driver familiar with the area.
- Arrange payment before departing.

**Follow basic safety tips.**

- Wear a seatbelt at all times.
- Sit in the back seat of cars and taxis.
- When on motorbikes or bicycles, always wear a helmet. (Bring a helmet from home, if needed.)
- Do not use a cell phone or text while driving (illegal in many countries).
- Travel during daylight hours only, especially in rural areas.
- If you choose to drive a vehicle in South Korea, learn the local traffic laws and have the proper paperwork.
- Get any driving permits and insurance you may need. Get an International Driving Permit (IDP). Carry the IDP and a US-issued driver's license at all times.
- Check with your auto insurance policy's international coverage, and get more coverage if needed. Make sure you have liability insurance.

**Flying**

- Avoid using local, unscheduled aircraft.
- If possible, fly on larger planes (more than 30 seats); larger airplanes are more likely to have regular safety inspections.
- Try to schedule flights during daylight hours and in good weather.

**Helpful Resources**

- [Road Safety Overseas](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_1179.html)
- [Information from the US Department of State](http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html): Includes tips on driving in other countries, International Driving Permits, auto insurance, and other resources.
- [The Association for International Road Travel](http://www.asirt.org)
Maintain personal security

Use the same common sense traveling overseas that you would at home, and always stay alert and aware of your surroundings.

Before you leave

- Research your destination(s), including local laws, customs, and culture.
- Monitor travel warnings and alerts and read travel tips from the US Department of State.
- Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP).
- Leave a copy of your itinerary, contact information, credit cards, and passport with someone at home.
- Pack as light as possible, and leave at home any item you could not replace.

While at your destination(s)

- Carry contact information for the nearest US embassy or consulate.
- Carry a photocopy of your passport and entry stamp; leave the actual passport securely in your hotel.
- Follow all local laws and social customs.
- Do not wear expensive clothing or jewelry.
- Always keep hotel doors locked, and store valuables in secure areas.
- If possible, choose hotel rooms between the 2nd and 6th floors.

Healthy Travel Packing List

Use the Healthy Travel Packing List for South Korea for a list of health-related items to consider packing for your trip. Talk to your doctor about which items are most important for you.

Why does CDC recommend packing these health-related items?

It’s best to be prepared to prevent and treat common illnesses and injuries. Some supplies and medicines may be difficult to find at your destination, may have different names, or may have different ingredients than what you normally use.
After Your Trip

If you are not feeling well after your trip, you may need to see a doctor. If you need help finding a travel medicine specialist, see Find a Clinic (/travel/page/find-clinic). Be sure to tell your doctor about your travel, including where you went and what you did on your trip. Also tell your doctor if you were bitten or scratched by an animal while traveling.

If your doctor prescribed antimalarial medicine for your trip, keep taking the rest of your pills after you return home. If you stop taking your medicine too soon, you could still get sick.

**Malaria is always a serious disease and may be a deadly illness.** If you become ill with a fever either while traveling in a malaria-risk area or after you return home (for up to 1 year), you should seek immediate medical attention and should tell the doctor about your travel history.

For more information on what to do if you are sick after your trip, see Getting Sick after Travel (/travel/page/getting-sick-after-travel).

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**Map Disclaimer** - The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on maps do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement are generally marked.