



THE STRESSES OF STUDY ABROAD

It is important to anticipate how your new environment and the stresses of study abroad might impact your health. Study abroad should not be seen as an escape route from problems at home or on campus. Prior to your leaving we want to restate that living and studying in a foreign environment sometimes creates unexpected physical and emotional stress, which can exacerbate otherwise mild disorders. Adjusting to life and learning in a foreign environment will have its stressful moments, and the more you are able to focus on your goals, the more you're likely to benefit from the experience.

Culture shock is a normal process of study abroad and includes symptoms such as depression, sleeping difficulties, homesickness, trouble concentrating, an urge to isolate yourself, and irritation with your host culture, all of which can be intensified when students are dealing with ongoing emotional or medical issues. It is very important that students with such problems discuss these issues with their study abroad advisors, parents or guardians, and mental health providers or other trained medical personnel before leaving. These people can help you determine if this is the right time to study abroad or if it might be best to wait until you can more fully engage in the experience.

It is important if, after arriving in the host country, you feel you are having trouble adjusting to changes in climate, diet, living conditions, and/or studying conditions, that you contact the ISA directors for help. They will assist you to the fullest extent possible.

If you have an ongoing medical problem, you need to take special precautions in preparing for and managing your condition overseas. If you regularly take prescription medications, bring a supply to last throughout your time abroad. Foreign drugs are not necessarily closely related to those in the United States. Even if they have the same chemical formula, they may be marketed under different names and/or may not be available in the strengths you desire. Bring a letter (in your carry-on luggage) from your home physician or pharmacist describing your medications, their dosage, their generic name, and a description of the condition being treated, and give your ISA directors a copy of the letter upon arrival. This letter could be helpful in an emergency. Make sure all drugs you take with you are in the original pharmacy containers and are clearly labeled. You should carry copies of the prescriptions to avoid problems with Customs. Be sure to carry all prescriptions, medicines, and related paperwork in your carry-on luggage.

In the case of narcotic medicines, it may not be prudent to carry additional supplies because of possible Customs difficulties. Instead, bring a prescription with the drug's generic name and a letter from your home physician or pharmacist describing your condition.