

VI. Physical and Mental Health

Visit to Worth Health Center

All students who plan to study abroad should have an appointment with a nurse practitioner at the Worth Health Center for a travel health consultation, and students who participate in College sponsored activities are required to do so. You can make an appointment by calling ext. 8058. Your immunization and other travel medicine needs will be reviewed, including what supplies you should take with you. Don't put this off until the last minute. Some immunizations need to be done over a period of weeks or months. **Please be advised that the health center does not carry all of the vaccines that may be required to visit a foreign country. If you require vaccines that the health center does not carry, you will be directed to where you may obtain them.**

Additional Medical Preparations

It is important to have complete medical and dental check-ups prior to departure so that if a health problem is identified, you can address it before leaving the country.

If you have a health condition that may require treatment while you are abroad, you will need to determine your medical needs beforehand, and make all indicated preparations. You should notify your abroad program or host of any medical needs. Do not assume that you will have access to the medications and care that you are used to; you must verify

that will be the case. Hosting programs and universities will do everything they can to support you, however the possibility always exists that your needs might not be able to be met at all overseas sites.

Students who participate in the Semester/Year Abroad program will be covered by either the College CISI insurance plan or a plan provided by their study abroad program. You can contact these companies in advance of travel to obtain information about physical and mental health services while abroad and for information on how to handle your medications, keeping the above caveats in mind.

Arrange to have copies of all pertinent medical records to take with you. You will also need to make arrangements to procure abroad (after determining if this is possible) or take with you any required prescription medications. If you carry prescription medications with you, be sure to have them in the original containers and with a copy of the prescription. Some medications that are legal in the US might be illegal in another country. You must determine the legality of your medications before traveling abroad with them. It is better to arrange with your insurance company, to purchase and take with you an ample amount of medication (when possible), rather than considering having medications shipped to you. Consult Mary Jane Palma at Worth Health Center about how they may be able to help you communicate with your insurance provider about this. See the medicine and toiletries section under "Packing." Be sure to bring your medications in your carry-on, not in checked luggage, to reduce the chance of theft.

Shipped items may be held up in customs and may never reach you. This is not a good strategy for obtaining medications.

As part of your personal crisis planning consider what you would do if you left your medications behind and couldn't get to them because of a travel delay (particularly one that could last a week or more).

Mental Health

Living abroad represents many new challenges as well as changes to familiar routines. If you currently see a counselor, it is extremely important to discuss your plans to study or live abroad with him or her. If you need to meet with a counselor on a regular basis, discuss this with your current counselor to get advice about locating an appropriate professional at your abroad site. You should also make your counseling needs known to your host program. Students covered by the College's CISI travel policy can explore access to counselors that have been identified by CISI by logging on to the CISI website.

Keep in mind that cultural adjustment is a normal part of living abroad. However, if your period of adjustment begins to affect your relationships, your academic work, and/or your daily life, you should seek to talk to a counselor. **Please note that appropriate mental health professionals may not be available at all study abroad locations.**

CAPS

In the event of an acute mental health concern, CAPS may provide consultation services to established CAPS clients in coordination with OCS and the host program. In most cases, CAPS consultation would be an adjunct to any assessment or evaluation that the host program might require and would not serve a primary diagnostic or evaluative function. CAPS does not offer distance counseling or psychotherapy to a student while studying abroad.

Safer Sex

The same considerations for safer sex that you have at Swarthmore College should be applied to any new environment. If you are sexually active, use a condom and/or dental dams. Take a supply with you as conditions of availability and purchase may be limited, and conditions of manufacture and storage may vary.

It is also important to understand cultural norms around sexual roles in your host country and program/university environment. It is extremely important to not put yourself in potentially dangerous situations. The use of drugs and alcohol can make you increasingly vulnerable to both poor decision-making as well as dangerous situations.

It is important to ask questions of your study abroad hosts and not make assumptions about the nature of consensual sex in any country in which you live and travel.

Alcohol and Drug Use

Depending on where you will live abroad, you may be in a country where it is legal for someone your age to drink alcohol, or it may be expressly forbidden. Be sure to know the regulations and abide by them. If consumption of alcohol is legal, act responsibly, and think of your well-being as well as the impression you make on others.

Do not use illegal drugs. You may find that there are severe penalties in your host country. Know before you go! Research laws relating to drugs and alcohol in your host country.

Ask your host university or program about any known hazards or risks, including the use of date rape drugs. Learn how to protect yourself from these hazards.

The following is from Drinking & Drugs
(<http://travel.state.gov/content/studentsabroad/en/smart-travel/drinking-and-drugs.html>)

Avoid underage and excessive alcohol consumption. Many arrests, accidents, rape, and other violent crimes have occurred because of alcohol abuse. While abroad, driving under the influence and drinking on the street or on public transportation may be considered criminal activities by local authorities, as they would be in many places in the United States.

Make sure your prescription medication is not considered an illegal narcotic. If you are going abroad with a preexisting medical condition, you should carry a letter from your doctor describing your condition and medications, including the generic names of prescribed drugs. Any medications carried overseas should be in their original containers and clearly labeled. Check with the foreign country's embassy here in the U.S. to make sure your medications are not considered illegal narcotics. A listing of foreign embassies and consulates in the U.S. is available on the Department of State's website.

Don't accept packages from anyone. Some Americans think it's a good idea to take advantage of an offer for an all-expense paid vacation abroad in exchange for carrying a small package in their luggage. If you are caught, ignorance is no excuse. If the package contains illegal drugs or substances, the fact that you didn't know will not reduce the charges....

Don't import, purchase, use, or have drugs in your possession. Drug charges can carry severe consequences, including imprisonment without bail for up to a year before a case is tried, physical abuse, and sentences ranging from fines and jail time, to years of hard labor. Some crimes even carry the penalty of death. Contraband or paraphernalia associated with illegal drug use can also get you in trouble.

Remember, while alcohol and drug use can surely result in legal and conduct-related penalties, it is fundamentally a health and wellness decision that should be made with careful planning, awareness of culture, and an understanding of one's values and boundaries. If you would like to plan further or seek additional support for your travel, please contact the Alcohol and Other-Drug Counselor & Educator.

