

## HEALTH

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## **UCEAP Health Requirements**

### **The UCEAP Health Clearance is a requirement for participation**

During the health clearance, you will discuss your medical history and current health status with a health practitioner. It is critical to tell the doctor about past illnesses and surgeries, chronic health problems, or other underlying medical conditions.

You may be cleared if the examining health practitioner considers that any medical condition is under control and you are stable on your medication.

You are responsible for getting this form to the UCEAP Systemwide Office by the deadline. You will be withdrawn from UCEAP if you do not complete the health clearance,

### **Some countries require an online travel health education certification course**

Most travelers are unaware or unprepared for the health-related risks of international travel. The UCEAP online travel health education course is designed to increase your health awareness, help you with the prevention of illness, and promote healthier travel. However, this course does not replace an in-person appointment with a travel health provider for necessary medications and immunizations. It is critical to consider vaccine-preventable diseases that may be easily contracted during travel, especially if you have a preexisting medical condition.

## Prevention

### Planning and awareness will decrease health risks while traveling

Learn about the health risks related to your trip by going to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [Destinations page](#) and choosing the country or countries you will be visiting. Check for “Travel Notices in Effect” for your destination.

Discuss your travel plans with the health professional who conducts your UCEAP Health Clearance, and inform him or her about any physical or psychological condition that may increase your health risk.

International travel can pose various risks to health, depending on the destination and the traveler. You may encounter sudden and significant changes in altitude, air pollution, humidity, microbes, and temperatures, which can result in illness. Serious health risks may arise in areas where accommodation is of poor quality, hygiene and sanitation are inadequate, medical services are not well developed, and clean water is scarce.

Learn about health issues in the countries where you will be traveling and how to prevent getting sick or contracting diseases.

Forward planning, appropriate preventive measures, and careful precautions can substantially reduce the risks of adverse health consequences.

### Pay attention to your health and protect against illness

Gastrointestinal disorders, sore throats, and colds often occur more frequently in a foreign country than at home, particularly soon after arrival. This is due to a new climate, environment, diet and water, and personal habits.

Even with good travel advice, vaccines, and medications, you are not 100 percent protected against all diseases or injuries. Healthy personal behaviors, such as being careful about food and water, protecting against insect and mosquito bites, and washing hands frequently, are important ways to prevent many common travel illnesses.

### Coping with preexisting medical conditions

Living and studying in a foreign environment may cause unexpected physical and emotional stress, which can exacerbate otherwise mild disorders. You must be able to adjust to potentially dramatic changes in climate, diet, living, and study conditions that may disrupt accustomed patterns of behavior. For example, if you have diabetes, travel can make it hard to keep your blood sugar within your target range because of changes in time zones, meal schedules, and types of foods available. Check your blood sugar level more often when you are away from home.

If your immune system is weakened from a disease such as HIV/AIDS or certain cancers, or from chemotherapy or medicines, talk to your doctor about your travel plans in detail. There may be added risks related to travel. If you get sick while traveling, your illness may be more severe or you may have added complications to your existing condition. UCEAP countries where hygiene and sanitation, medical care, and water quality are of a high standard pose relatively less risks for your health. In contrast, UCEAP countries where hygiene, sanitation, and medical services are below standards, and clean water is unavailable may pose serious health risks; therefore, it is important to follow health precautions before, during, and after the journey.

### Identify medical services and resources abroad

Take steps to anticipate any health issues that could arise during your stay abroad.

Identify host country health care resources in advance of your trip in case of a medical emergency. This is especially important if you have a preexisting medical condition. Information about local medical care may be provided after arrival during your UCEAP on-site orientation.

**Know what to do during a health emergency**

You never know when and where an emergency will occur. It is important to keep contact information (phone numbers and addresses) of local services you may need and/or people you need to contact.

Contact the Study Center staff if you are not feeling well.

**Seek medical attention after your return if necessary**

If you are not feeling well or have been injured after your return to the U.S. from UCEAP, seek medical attention, including psychological support and counseling, if necessary.

## Health Risks: General Considerations

### Influenza (flu) vaccine

UCEAP strongly encourages a flu vaccine before departure, particularly if you have a chronic medical condition (e.g., asthma, diabetes). Influenza is one of the most common ailments reported by UCEAP students.

### Sexually transmitted diseases

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are infections that are spread primarily through person-to-person sexual contact. There are more than 30 different sexually transmissible bacteria, viruses, and parasites. The most common conditions they cause are gonorrhea, chlamydial infection, syphilis, trichomoniasis, chancroid, genital herpes, genital warts, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection, and hepatitis B infection. STDs are the main preventable cause of infertility, particularly in women. Many countries have been unsuccessful in adequately controlling STDs. Lack of adequate precaution (e.g., engaging in unprotected sex) in situations where there is a risk of contracting a sexually transmitted disease could lead to serious problems.

The surest way to avoid transmission of STDs is to abstain from sexual contact. In addition, consistent and correct use of latex male condoms can reduce the risk of STDs.

Access the CDC [Sexually Transmitted Diseases](#) website for more information.

### HIV/AIDS

AIDS is a chronic, life-threatening condition caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). By damaging your immune system, HIV interferes with your body's ability to fight off viruses, bacteria and fungi that cause disease. HIV makes you more susceptible to certain types of cancers and to infections your body would normally resist, such as pneumonia and meningitis. The virus and the infection itself are known as HIV. "Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome" (AIDS) is the name given to the later stages of an HIV infection. The infection occurs worldwide.

#### How HIV Is Transmitted

The ways in which HIV can be transmitted have been clearly identified, as follows: 1) sex, 2) infected blood, 3) needle sharing, 4) accidental needle sticks, 5) mother to child, and in rare cases, 6) through organ or tissue transplants or unsterilized dental or surgical equipment. To become infected with HIV, infected blood, semen, vaginal secretions, or breast milk must enter your body. One cannot become infected through ordinary contact (e.g., hugging, kissing, dancing, or shaking hands) with someone who has HIV or AIDS.

#### HIV/AIDS Prevention

There is no vaccine to prevent HIV infection and no cure for AIDS, but it is possible to protect yourself and others from infection by educating yourself about HIV and avoiding any behavior that allows HIV-infected fluids into your body. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the most reliable ways to avoid becoming infected with or transmitting HIV are:

- Abstain from sexual intercourse (i.e., oral, vaginal, or anal sex). All partners should get tested for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) before initiating sexual intercourse. Having another STD increases by two to five times the likelihood a person will become infected with HIV and increases the likelihood an infected person will transmit HIV.
- If you choose to have sexual intercourse, practice safe sex. The proper and consistent use of latex or polyurethane (a type of plastic) condoms when engaging in sexual intercourse can greatly reduce a person's risk of acquiring or transmitting sexually transmitted diseases.
- Do not use or allow the use of contaminated, unsterilized syringes or needles for any purpose (drugs, electrolysis, tattooing, acupuncture, medical or dental procedures, etc.). Needles for blood tests or injections must be sterile, preferably disposable, and pre-packaged in a sealed container. If an injection is required, make sure the needles and syringes come straight from a sealed, sterilized package, or have been sterilized with

chemicals or boiled for 20 minutes. If in doubt, ask how the equipment has been sterilized. In some countries you can buy needles and syringes and take them to the hospital for your own use. Caution regarding instrument sterilization applies to all instruments that pierce the skin, including needles used for tattoos. If you are diabetic or require routine injections, bring a supply of syringes and needles sufficient for your entire stay abroad.

- Beware of infected blood, blood components, or locally-produced blood clotting factor concentrates and other blood products. Not all countries have mandatory HIV screening of donated blood. In some locales, ascertaining the availability of HIV-screened blood and blood products may be difficult. Not all countries have the resources to sterilize needles, and some countries reuse even disposable equipment. You can inquire at the local U.S. embassy, U.S. consulate, or Red Cross office about safe sources of blood. If an injury occurs and a blood transfusion is needed, the blood needs to be tested for HIV antibodies by trained laboratory technicians. Do not assume that blood you will receive has been screened.

If you are injured or become ill while abroad, consider delaying any procedures that may involve a blood transfusion unless it is absolutely necessary.

### **Abuse of alcohol and other drugs**

Many students experiment with alcohol and other drugs when they are away from home, particularly when they are in a foreign country where they may be of legal drinking age. If you decide to drink while abroad, drink wisely. Alcohol abuse usually leads to unsafe choices, poor academic performance, higher risk behavior, and unwanted sexual activity. Do not endanger yourself, others, or property. Use good judgment whenever consuming alcohol.

Substance abuse may result in serious health problems or even sudden death, which in the case of some drugs (e.g., cocaine) can occur after first-time use. In addition, students may face legal consequences for behavior they exhibit while under the influence of alcohol or other substances (e.g., arrest, fines, etc.).

Alcohol is the “drug of choice” in college. For some students, use of alcohol and other drugs is minimal or moderate, and may not cause them or others significant concern. However, a certain percentage of students study abroad with an existing alcohol or drug abuse problem. A widely agreed-upon definition of alcohol or drug abuse is when a person’s use interferes with his or her physical, social, or economic functioning.

Alcohol is classified as a depressant because it slows down the central nervous system, causing a decrease in motor coordination, reaction time, and intellectual performance. At high doses, the respiratory system slows down drastically and can cause a coma or death. Acute alcohol poisoning is when more alcohol is absorbed into the bloodstream reaching a toxic level.

#### **How to identify alcohol poisoning:**

- Person is asleep and cannot be awakened
- Breathing is slow or irregular
- Skin/lips are cold, clammy, pale, or bluish
- Vomiting while passed out

#### **How to help:**

- Trust your instincts!
- Turn the person on their side to prevent choking while vomiting.
- Stay with the person. Do not leave them alone or let them “sleep it off.”
- Call the local emergency number, the UCEAP representative, and/or a hospital immediately. Do not hesitate to call for help.
- Stay calm.

**Alcohol myths:**

**Myth:** I can drink and still be in control.

**Fact:** Drinking impairs your judgment, which increases the likelihood that you will do something you will later regret such as having unprotected sex, date rape, damaging property, or being victimized by others.

**Myth:** I can sober up quickly if I have to.

**Fact:** It takes 2–3 hours to eliminate the alcohol content of two drinks, depending on your weight. Nothing can speed up this process—not even coffee or a cold shower.

**Myth:** I'd be better off if I learn to “hold my liquor.”

**Fact:** If you have to drink increasingly larger amounts of alcohol to get a buzz or get high, you are developing tolerance. This increases your vulnerability to many serious problems, including alcoholism.

**Myth:** Beer and wine do not have as much alcohol as hard liquor.

**Fact:** A 12-ounce bottle of beer in the U.S. has the same amount of alcohol as a standard shot of 80-proof liquor (either straight or in a mixed drink) or 5 ounces of wine. The alcohol content of beer varies by local practice or beer style.

## Medication and Supplies

### Make sure your medications are legal abroad

Some medications that are commonly prescribed or sold in the U.S. may be considered illegal substances in other countries or may contain controlled substances.

Check before departure in case you need to obtain a permit. In particular, some medications for ADD/ADHD may require significant research and licensing before being allowed into a country.

Be aware that some FDA-approved medications have the same brand names as medications that are marketed outside the U.S. but contain completely different active ingredients. No international regulatory system exists to ensure that new brand names are sufficiently different from existing ones elsewhere in the world to prevent undue confusion by pharmacists who are filling prescriptions from outside their country.

Find out if your medication is available abroad to ensure that you have an adequate supply of it while on the program.

Europ Assistance offers support with prescription replacements and refills, and can answer questions regarding prescription drug status abroad to the extent that their resources in the specific country will allow them. Call (866) 451-7606 (inside the U.S.) or collect (202) 828-5896 (from outside the U.S.). You can also call the country's Consul General Office for information.

### Travel with an adequate supply of medications

Due to strict customs regulations, some countries may limit the amount of a particular prescription medication that you can transport in and out of the host country. It is important to check with the host country's embassy or foreign service office in Washington, D.C. about restrictions.

### Tips for traveling with medication

Keep medications in their original, labeled containers (rather than transferring them to travel containers).

Take a copy of your prescription with the names of the active ingredients (including brand and generic names) and a letter from your physician with your diagnosis, prescribed medications, and required dosage.

Pack your medication in your carry-on luggage; checked baggage can get lost. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) allows prescription medications in quantities exceeding three ounces and the medications are not required to be in a zip-top bag. Declare these items for inspection at checkpoints.

Carry a medication/emergency card with your name, drug allergies, the name and contact information of your physician, exact names of the medications that you are currently taking, and an emergency contact.

### Mailing medication abroad

Many countries have strict regulations (high customs duties), restrictions, or prohibition (medication confiscated) on having medications sent by mail, as not all U.S. medications are legal in other countries.

### Filling a U.S. prescription abroad

If you need to fill a prescription abroad, be aware that the FDA (U.S. Federal Drug Administration) warns that medications abroad may contain different active ingredients, even though many of them are marketed under the same or similar-sounding brand names as in the U.S. The FDA also cautions that taking a drug containing a different active ingredient may not help your medical condition and could even be harmful. Sometimes a drug that has the same name may not be prescribed for the same illness as in the U.S.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), virtually any drug, including antibiotics and antimalarial medications, can be purchased without prescription in many developing countries. Do not buy these medications unless you are familiar with the product. The quality of these drugs may not meet U.S. standards and they may even be counterfeit or potentially hazardous because of contaminants. In fact, 36 percent of antimalarials abroad are counterfeit.

- ▶ Before returning to the U.S., be aware that medications purchased abroad may not be FDA-approved or allowed into the U.S.

### **Contraception**

If you need contraception while abroad, it is best to bring supplies with you. Each country has a different policy regarding availability and dispensing of contraception.

### **Anti-Anxiety and anti-depression medicine**

Never abruptly discontinue your medication. Compliance with prescribed medication regimens is important. Stopping the medication early—without consulting a doctor—can result in the return of your original symptoms or adverse reactions. For example, discontinuation effects are common after withdrawal of MAOIs and may include disorientation, confusion, agitation, cognitive impairment, catatonia, paranoid delusions, aggressiveness, hallucinations, depression, thoughts of suicide, slowed speech, and sleep disturbance. Researchers have found that suddenly stopping treatment with antidepressants known as SSRIs can cause serious withdrawal effects, both physically and psychologically. A physician may recommend gradually decreasing or tapering off the medication. Tapering off is particularly important with some medications to give your body an adjustment period. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, discontinuing anxiety and depression medication too early may produce a relapse.

### **Prescription eyewear**

If you wear glasses or contact lenses, take an extra pair and your written prescription abroad. Take sufficient quantities of contact lens solution, since it may not be readily available or the product name may not be the same as in the U.S. For example, Optifree Express is called Optifree Multiaction Solution in Europe, and Renu is called All Care solution in China; the formulation may be different or you may be allergic to the ingredients. The manufacturer may not sell their entire line of products in certain countries. Also, in some countries you may need to see an optometrist, optician, or ophthalmologist to get contact lens solutions because they are considered drugs.

### **Information for students with diabetes**

Diabetic management is important when traveling. Plan ahead to ensure that you have all the things you need.

The American Diabetes Association recommends that persons with diabetes or other persons who require routine or frequent injections should carry a supply of unused syringes and needles, when accompanied by insulin or other injectable medication, sufficient to last their stay abroad.

Pack a good supply of syringes; not all sizes are available abroad. However, be aware that carrying needles and syringes without a prescription may be illegal in some countries. Carry a letter from your physician indicating that the needles and syringes are necessary for your physical well-being. If you use an insulin pump, carry additional refills. Ask your physician for a note on prescription pad or letterhead explaining that the pump is connected to a catheter under the skin and cannot be removed. When traveling by plane, request a visual inspection of your diabetic supplies and have the letter ready to be viewed by the agent at the security check.

Note that TSA requires that insulin in any form, and a dispenser, must be properly marked with a professionally printed label identifying the medication or manufacturer's name or pharmaceutical label.

**Sample first-aid kit**

A medical kit should be carried for all destinations, especially for those where there may be significant and/or endemic health risks, such as developing countries and locations where the immediate availability of specific medications is uncertain). You are advised to take a personal first-aid kit that includes treatment for minor cuts and abrasions and something for temporary diarrhea.

The essentials of a good First Aid kit include a variety of bandages, medications, and equipment to stabilize injuries until proper medical attention can be administered. Obtain advice from your physician on assembling a suitable medical kit and visit the [CDC website](#) for a list of recommended items.

## Psychological Health

### Discuss and disclose health conditions before departure

Study abroad can be a personally rewarding and culturally expanding experience, but it can also be somewhat stressful. Many college-age students experience anxiety, depression, stress, and other mental health conditions. In addition, existing mild physical or psychological disorders can be aggravated by the stresses of travel and life in an unfamiliar setting.

You are responsible for assessing (along with your parent/guardian and physician) any physical or mental health conditions that may be adversely affected by studying abroad; there are certain conditions that may require continued therapy, monitoring, or specific support mechanisms while abroad.

When you disclose such conditions in advance of participation, UCEAP can help you to arrange appropriate accommodations abroad (if they are available).

### Types of psychological disorders

There are many different conditions that are recognized as psychological health disorders. Common disorders are discussed in this section.

#### Anxiety Disorders

Anxiety is a vague, uncomfortable feeling of fear, dread, or danger. Symptoms can vary in severity and length. According to the [Anxiety Disorders Association of America](#), the term “anxiety disorder” refers to: 1) generalized anxiety disorder (GAD); 2) obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD); 3) panic disorder; 4) post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); 5) social anxiety disorder (also called social phobia); and 6) specific phobias.

The most important goal for students who are prone to anxiety is to keep stress levels as low as possible.

#### Mood Disorders

These disorders (affective disorders) involve persistent feelings of sadness or periods of feeling overly happy, or fluctuations from extreme happiness to extreme sadness. The most common mood disorders are depression, mania, and bipolar disorder.

#### Psychotic Disorders

Psychotic disorders involve distorted awareness and thinking. Schizophrenia is an example of a psychotic disorder.

#### Eating Disorders

Eating disorders such as anorexia, bulimia, and compulsive eating disorder include extreme emotions, attitudes, and behaviors surrounding weight and food. Eating disorders are real, complex, and devastating conditions that can have serious consequences on health, productivity, and relationships. Eating disorders can lead to significant physiological changes that require medical treatment in addition to psychiatric treatment.

#### Impulse Control and Addiction Disorders

People with impulse control disorders are unable to resist urges or impulses to perform acts that could be harmful to themselves or others. Pyromania (starting fires), kleptomania (stealing), and compulsive gambling are examples of impulse control disorders. Alcohol and drugs are common objects of addiction. Often, people with these disorders become so involved with the objects of their addiction that they begin to ignore responsibilities and relationships.

### Personality Disorders

People with personality disorders have extreme and inflexible personality traits that are distressing to the person and cause problems in work, school, or social relationships. In addition, the person’s patterns of thinking and behavior significantly differ from the expectations of society and are so rigid that they interfere with the person’s ability to function effectively. Examples include antisocial personality disorder, obsessive-compulsive personality disorder, and paranoid personality disorder (pervasive distrust and suspicion of others such that their motives are interpreted as malevolent).

### References and resources

The following are UC offices of counseling and psychological services:

**UC Berkeley**

Counseling and Psychological Services  
2222 Bancroft Way  
(510) 642-9494  
TTY/TDD: (510) 642-2368

**UC Davis**

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)  
219 North Hall  
(530) 752-0871

**UC Irvine**

Counseling Center  
Room 202 Student Services I  
(949) 824-4642

**UC Los Angeles**

John Wooden Center West  
221 Westwood Plaza  
(310) 825-0768

**UC Merced**

Counseling Services  
Kolligian Library, First floor  
West Wing  
(209) 724-4266

**UC Riverside**

Counseling Center  
Veitch Student Center  
North Wing  
(951) 827-5531

**UC San Diego**

Psychological and Counseling Services (P&CS)  
Galbraith Hall, Room 190  
(858) 534-3758

**UC Santa Barbara**

Counseling Services  
(805) 893-4411

**UC Santa Cruz**

Counseling and Psychological Services  
1156 High Street  
(831) 459-2628

There are many valuable websites that address mental health topics and issues. Below are some useful resources for additional information about mental health.

- [National Eating Disorders Association](#)
- [The JED Foundation](#)
- [Mental Help Net](#)
- [Mental Health America \(MHA\)](#)
- [Outside the Classroom](#)
- [ULifeline](#) (free, anonymous website that links you to your college counseling center and a library of mental health information)