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HAVE YOU MADE YOUR SPRING TRAVEL HEALTH PLANS?
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With spring weather not too far away, many people are making plans to travel outside the United States. The Monongalia County Health Department (MCHD) wishes to remind everybody that while you’re making your travel plans you should also be making your travel health plans. Travel health plans are important for two reasons. First, you run the risk of becoming ill during international travel so you need to be prepared to deal with destinations that pose significant infectious disease risk. Second, by taking proper precautions to avoid becoming ill during international travel you help safeguard your community when you return.

Travelers should always research their destination ahead of time to make sure that they understand the health risks and have the proper vaccinations before they travel. Some destinations do have inherent health problems and will require proof that the traveler has been vaccinated for a specific disease(s). Other destinations will require the traveler to gain knowledge beyond just being vaccinated. A good example of this is the Zika virus. There is no vaccination or antiviral to provide a cure for this disease. It is dependent on the traveler to know that they are entering a Zika virus area so that they are prepared to protect themselves and their traveling companions from mosquito bites.

One of the most important aspects of the travel health plan is obtaining required vaccinations. Travelers should make sure that they have preplanned enough time to complete any needed vaccinations. This is important because many travelers do not understand that some vaccinations cannot be accomplished within 24 to 48 hours. This is because: 1) special vaccines for special destinations may have to be ordered directly from the manufacturer, 2) some vaccines have to be given as a series of shots over a period of time and 3) depending on which vaccine you are receiving it may take days or weeks for it to develop antibodies to provide optimal protection for the traveler.

If you’re planning to travel outside the United States this spring and need assistance with your Travel Health Plans, call the MCHD Travel Health Clinic for more information or to set up an appointment at 304-598-5100.

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