

# Health Information for Travelers to Timor-Leste (June 2006)

In general, the health precautions one must take when travelling to Timor-Leste are similar to that when travelling to other parts of South East Asia. Travelers to Timor-Leste may have a higher risk of getting the following diseases:

- Diarrhea
- Malaria
- Dengue Fever/Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever
- Hepatitis A

and for those travelling to the districts/rural areas, exposure to agents causing Filariasis and Japanese encephalitis is more likely.

## For people with pre-existing conditions

For people with pre-existing chronic conditions, (e.g., hypertension, diabetes) it would be advisable to bring your medications for maintenance. Bring enough to cover for your stay. Medicines and specialist care are not easily available in the country.

## Precautions for Diarrhea and Hepatitis A

The following are the recommended precautions for diarrhea and other food borne diseases:

- Wash your hands with soap and water before and after meals and after using the toilet
- Drink only bottled or boiled water (2 minutes of continuous boiling is sufficient) or drinks in cans (e.g., soda).
- If you plan to travel to the districts, take with you a supply of drinking water of 2-3 liters/day/person
- Avoid tap water, fountain drinks and ice cubes
- Eat only thoroughly cooked food and fruits and vegetables that you peel and handle yourself. Remember: "Boil it, cook it, peel it or forget it."
- Eat hot food when it is hot and avoid re-heating food
- Always check expiration date of packaged food
- Eat only dairy products that are pasteurized
- Avoid food sold by street vendors

## Precautions for Malaria, Dengue, Filariasis, and Japanese Encephalitis

Drug prophylaxis is recommended for malaria prevention. These should be prescribed by your health care provider/physician. It is recommended that you see consult with your health care provider at least a month prior to travel.

Recommended malaria prophylaxis **for adults** is as follows:

Mefloquine 250 mg tablet/week should be taken one week prior to departure, continued during stay and four weeks after return or Doxycycline 100 mg tablet daily started 1 day before departure continued during stay until four weeks upon return

Again, it would always be better to consult your health care provider regarding these drugs as they may have side effects and may interact with other medications you are taking.

Prophylaxis alone does not protect one from malaria. It is equally important to protect yourself from mosquito bites. During your stay in Timor-Leste:

- put on mosquito repellent day and night, mosquitoes which carry dengue virus bite during daytime
- use insect repellents that contain DEET
- repellents with 30-35% concentrations of DEET are effective; it is advisable to reapply every 4 hours
- sleep under a treated mosquito net especially when doing outdoor activities like camping

**By protecting oneself from mosquito bites you protect yourself from other diseases also such as: Dengue, Filariasis, and Japanese encephalitis.**

Japanese encephalitis vaccine is only recommended if you plan to stay for 4 weeks or more or when there is a known outbreak of the disease.

## Other communicable diseases

Some diseases are communicable through sexual contact like Hepatitis B and HIV/AIDS. For these:

- Practice safe sex, use condoms
- Do not share needles

## Protection from the sun also keeps you healthy

Exposure to the Ultraviolet (UV) rays of the sun causes skin cancer. UV rays penetrate and change the structure of skin cells. This leads to skin cancer.

Protection from the sun can be done in many ways, all of the following are advised:

- Wear sunglasses
- Wear a shirt
- Wear sunscreen
- Wear a hat

Just to help remind you here is the Australian sun protection catch phrase: SLIP, SLOP, SLAP!

- Slip in a shirt
- Slop on sunscreen
- Slap on a hat

Seek shade whenever possible.

## Protection from Road Accidents

It would be advisable to walk and drive defensively. Motor vehicle accidents happen often in Timor-Leste. Avoid travel at night outside of Dili and always use seatbelts.

If you need any additional information please contact WHO country office 7231091 or 7231092

Email: [whodili@searo.who.int](mailto:whodili@searo.who.int)