

# HEALTH

*Health issues (and the quality of medical facilities) vary enormously depending on where you are in Cambodia. The major cities are generally not high risk and have good facilities, though rural areas are another matter. We strongly recommend having a good health insurance and carrying a good first aid kit. The following advice is a general guide only.*

## AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

- ✚ Self-diagnosis and treatment of health problems can be risky: always seek professional medical help.
- ✚ Antibiotics should ideally be administered only under medical supervision. Take only the recommended dose at the prescribed intervals and use the whole course, even if the illness seems to be cured earlier. Stop immediately if there are any serious reactions.
- ✚ The best clinics and hospitals in Cambodia are found in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap. A consultation usually costs in the region of US\$20 to US\$50, plus medicine. Elsewhere, facilities are more basic, although a private clinic is usually preferable to a government hospital. For serious injuries, seek treatment in Bangkok.

## BEFORE YOU GO

All travelers should consult their doctor with regards to vaccinations and up-to-date health advice at least 4-8 weeks before departure.

- ✚ Pack any medications in clearly labelled containers.
- ✚ Bring a letter from your doctor describing your medical conditions and medications.
- ✚ If carrying syringes or needles, have a physician's letter documenting their medical necessity.
- ✚ If you have a heart condition, bring a copy of a recent ECG.
- ✚ Bring extra supplies of any regular medication (in case of loss or theft).

## RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

**The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends the following vaccinations for travellers to Southeast Asia:**

- ✚ **Adult diphtheria** and tetanus Single booster recommended if you've had none in the previous 10 years.
- ✚ **Hepatitis A:** All travellers to Southeast Asia should be vaccinated against hepatitis A. Travelers can get hepatitis A through contaminated food or water in Southeast Asia, regardless of where they are eating or staying. Vaccine is recommended for all travelers over one year of age. It should be given at least two weeks (preferably four weeks or more) before departure. A booster should be given 6-12 months later to confer long-term immunity.
- ✚ **Hepatitis B:** Travellers can get hepatitis B through sexual contact, contaminated needles, and blood products, so this vaccine is recommended if you might have sex with a new partner, get a tattoo or piercing, or have any medical procedures.

Everything is possible

- ✚ **Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR):** Measles, mumps, and rubella are serious diseases and vaccines against them are required unless you have had the diseases. Many young adults require a booster.
- ✚ **Typhoid:** Travelers can get typhoid through contaminated food or water in Southeast Asia. this vaccine is recommended for most travelers, especially if you are staying with friends or relatives, visiting smaller cities or rural areas, or if you are an adventurous eater.
- ✚ **Varicella** If you haven't had chickenpox, discuss this vaccination with your doctor.

#### Health risks in Cambodia include

- ✚ **Travelers' diarrhea** is the most common travel-related ailment. The cornerstone of prevention is food and water precautions, as outlined below. All travelers should bring along an antibiotic and an antidiarrheal drug to be started promptly if significant diarrhea occurs, defined as three or more loose stools in an 8-hour period or five or more loose stools in a 24-hour period, especially if associated with nausea, vomiting, cramps, fever or blood in the stool.
- ✚ **Japanese Encephalitis:** vaccine is recommended for those who expect to spend a month or more in rural areas and for short-term travelers who may spend substantial time outdoors or engage in extensive outdoor activities in rural or agricultural areas, especially in the evening. Japanese encephalitis is believed to occur throughout Cambodia. The disease is transmitted by mosquito bites, probably from May through October.
- ✚ **Malaria:** When traveling in Cambodia, you should avoid mosquito bites to prevent malaria. You may need to take prescription medicine before, during, and after your trip to prevent malaria, depending on your travel plans, such as where you are going, when you are traveling, and if you are spending a lot of time outdoors or sleeping outside. Talk to your doctor about how you can prevent malaria while traveling.
- ✚ **Rabies:**
  - Vaccine is recommended for travelers spending a lot of time outdoors, for travelers at high risk for animal bites, such as veterinarians and animal handlers, for long-term travelers and expatriates, and for travelers involved in any activities that might bring them into direct contact with bats. Children are considered at higher risk because they tend to play with animals, may receive more severe bites, or may not report bites. In Cambodia, the chief risk is from dog bites. Monkeys and other wildlife may also carry rabies and should be avoided.
  - Any animal bite or scratch should be thoroughly cleaned with large amounts of soap and water and local health authorities should be contacted immediately for possible post-exposure treatment, whether or not the person has been immunized against rabies.
- ✚ **Yellow Fever:** vaccine is required for all travelers arriving from a yellow-fever-infected country in [Africa or the Americas](#) and for travelers who have been in transit more than 12 hours in an airport located in a country with risk of yellow fever transmission, but is not recommended or required otherwise. Yellow fever must be administered at an approved yellow fever vaccination center, which will give each vaccinee a fully validated International Certificate of Vaccination. Yellow fever vaccine should not in general be given to those who

are younger than nine months of age, pregnant, immunocompromised, or allergic to eggs. It should also not be given to those with a history of thymus disease or thymectomy.

## ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

- ✚ **Prickly Heat:** prickly heat is an itchy rash caused by excessive perspiration trapped under the skin. It usually strikes people who have just arrived in a hot climate. Keeping cool, bathing often, drying the skin, using a mild talcum or prickly heat powder, or finding air-conditioning may help.
- ✚ **Snakes:** To minimise the chances of being bitten by a snake, always wear boots, socks and long trousers when walking through undergrowth where snakes may be present.
- ✚ **Insect Bites & Stings:**
  - Bedbugs live in various places, but particularly in dirty mattresses and bedding, and are evidenced by spots of blood on bedclothes or on the wall. Bedbugs leave itchy bites in neat rows. Calamine lotion or Stingose spray may help.
  - All lice cause itching and discomfort. They make themselves at home in your hair (head lice), your clothing (body lice) or in your pubic hair (crabs). You catch lice through direct contact with infected people or by sharing combs, clothing and the like. Powder or shampoo treatment will kill the lice, and infected clothing should be washed in very hot, soapy water and left to dry in the sun.
  - Leeches may be present in damp rainforest conditions; they attach themselves to your skin to suck your blood. Trekkers often get them on their legs or in their boots. Salt or a lighted cigarette end will make them fall off.
  - Sandflies inhabit beaches (usually the more remote ones) across southeast Asia. They have a nasty bite that is extremely itchy and can easily become infected. Use an antihistamine to quell the itching, and, if you have to itch, use the palm of your hand and not your nails or infection may follow.
- ✚ **Heat Exhaustion:**
  - Dehydration and salt deficiency can cause heat exhaustion. Take time to acclimatise to high temperatures, drink sufficient liquids and do not do anything too physically demanding.
  - Salt deficiency is characterised by fatigue, lethargy, headaches, giddiness and muscle cramps; salt tablets may help, but adding extra salt to your food is better.
  - Heatstroke can occur if the body's heat-regulating mechanism breaks down, causing the body temperature to rise to dangerous levels. Long, continuous periods of exposure to high temperatures and insufficient fluids can leave you vulnerable to heatstroke.
- ✚ **Food:** Avoid dairy products which are likely to have been made from unboiled milk. Only eat well-cooked meat and fish. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled.
- ✚ **Water:** The number-one rule is be careful of water and ice, although both are usually factory produced. If you don't know for certain that the water is safe, assume the worst. Reputable brands of bottled water or soft drinks are usually fine, but you can't safely drink tap water. Only use water from containers with a serrated seal. Tea and coffee are generally fine, as they're made with boiled water.