Plan in advance before traveling!
Whether you are traveling to Zimbabwe or the North Carolina mountains this summer, advance planning can help ensure you will have a safe and healthy trip. Prior to leaving for your trip, it is important to gather information about the destination and consider what activities in which you plan to participate. First, consider the basics; make sure you also know where you will be staying and how you will get from place to place. Next, consider the risks associated with the location you will be visiting. Is the food safe to eat? Is the water safe to drink? Are there any diseases against which you need to be protected prior to traveling? The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) maintains a website that contains data concerning endemic diseases as well as outbreaks around the world and other health-related situations. Visit www.cdc.gov/travel prior to your trip to learn more!

Before you travel, it is also important that you consider your health. Make sure to carry identifying information with you on your trip that not only includes your name, address, phone number, and emergency contacts, but it also should include allergy information (environmental, foods, and medications), chronic health problems, underlying medical conditions, past illnesses or surgeries, and current medications.

Consider your health and pose the question: how likely is it that I will require medical attention while on my trip? For example, if you have asthma and are visiting a topical location, you may need to visit a doctor if you have worsening asthma symptoms. By planning in advance, you can find potential health care facilities in the area you will be visiting in case any problems arise!

Visit your health-care provider before you travel!
The CDC recommends that travelers visit their healthcare provider ideally 4-6 weeks prior to travel. This will allow enough time to obtain any necessary vaccinations. Before visiting your healthcare provider, the CDC recommends that you consider the following:
- When are you traveling and how long will you be at each location?
- Where are you traveling? Rural areas or urban areas?
- Where will you stay? An air-conditioned hotel or open-air tents?
- What activities will you be doing while traveling? Hiking? Scuba diving? Ziplining?

Know your vaccination history and provide your healthcare provider with information about any previous reactions to vaccinations.

Prevent illness during travel!
Consider everything you will need to keep you healthy while traveling before you leave! If you will be outdoors during travel, make sure you reapply sunscreen with an SPF ≥30 every two hours and stay in the shade as much as possible. Also, keep your body covered as much as possible by wearing broad-rimmed hats and protective clothing and make an effort to stay indoors between 10am and 4pm.

When you reach your destination, do not forget the importance of hygiene! Wash your hands frequently: before eating, after visiting the restroom, and throughout the day.
Finally, by arriving at your destination with a fully stocked travel kit, you may be able to treat problems and avoid going to a local clinic or hospital. While each traveler’s kit should be unique, depending on the destination and activities planned, the box below lists items commonly found in a travel kit.

**Example of what the CDC recommends to include in a travel health kit:**

- All prescription and over-the-counter medications you take at home
- Destination-related medications (prescription antimalarial or altitude sickness medications)
- Consider including medication for:
  - pain or fever (examples include acetaminophen, ibuprofen, or naproxen)
  - stomach upset or diarrhea (such as loperamide or bismuth subsalicylate that can be purchased without a prescription or prescription antibiotics that can be used for self-treatment of moderate to severe diarrhea)
  - throat and respiratory symptoms (including lozenges, antihistamines, and/or decongestants)
  - motion sickness
  - allergic reactions (such as an Epi-pen)
- Consider including first aid supplies: gloves, bandages, gauze, adhesive tape, bandages, antiseptic, cotton, antibacterial/antifungal ointments or creams, 1% hydrocortisone cream, aloe, saline eye drops
- Insect repellant
- Sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30
- Antibacterial hand wipes or hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol
- Extra pair of contacts or prescription glasses, if applicable
- Addresses and phone numbers for:
  - family member or close contact in the US
  - health care provider at home
  - local hospitals or clinics where you will be staying
  - US Embassy or Consulate in the destination country

If you take medications on a regular basis, remember to visit your pharmacy at least a week before leaving to ensure you have plenty of medication. When packing medications, make sure you:

- store the medications in the original containers
- protect the medications from excessive heat
- carry copies of all prescriptions, including their generic names
- for controlled substances and injectable medications, carry a note from the prescribing physician on letterhead stationary explaining why you require these medications