Whether you travel on business, in search of a job, on pilgrimage or on holiday, it makes sense to take basic precautions before, during and after your journey to avoid the inconvenience, stress and cost of ill-health.

Scurvy

Seafarers on long ocean voyages and polar explorers used to suffer from a disease which made their limbs swell while "their teeth were loose and decayed and their gums rotting and foul," as a 16th century traveller wrote. This disease, scurvy, was simply due to a lack of vitamin C. The mariners eventually learnt that a diet of dried beef and weevil-infested ship's biscuits must be supplemented by plenty of orange, lime or lemon juice. Today's travellers too should drink plenty of fresh fruit juice.
WHO's medical pack

WHO staff members who travel on duty are each given a medical pack. Its contents are regularly revised, but have to meet the following criteria:
- items of first aid
- drugs with no contra-indications or side-effects
- drugs that can be used in self-medication without danger
- products that pose no serious problems of long conservation
- items that are not too bulky; the kit should fit in the traveller's hand-luggage, so bandaging and dressings are kept to a minimum.

The WHO medical pack includes:
- Tetracycline hydrochloride: 30 tablets of 250 mg. An antibiotic active against many pathogenic bacteria responsible for digestive, respiratory and urinary infections with fever.
- Rehydration salts: 4 packets. In case of serious diarrhoea.
- Flumetason pivalate and cloc­quinol, 15 gm tube. This cream includes an antibacterial and anti-fungal drug as well as a cortisone derivative with anti-inflammatory action. Useful for minor skin infections, insect bites and fungal eczemas.
- Chloroquine for the prevention and treatment of malaria.
- Undecylenate powder and antymycotic cream. To prevent cutaneous mycoses, athletes' foot and so on.
- Insect repellent and insecticide powder.
- Three syringes and needles, one-use-only. These permit the traveller to have an injection or blood test without any risk of contamination or infection with diseases such as AIDS. A note explaining the presence of the syringes is included in case any airport official suspects drug abuse.

Tourists—take care!

Swimming is excellent exercise—provided you don't take risks or swim in polluted waters. Sunbathing too is fashionable today—but skin cancer has a clear relationship with long-term exposure to ultra-violet light and with acute episodes of sunburn. As for casual sexual encounters, the advent of AIDS is affecting attitudes worldwide; the wise traveller thinks "no sex" or only "safe sex".