

# HEALTH GUIDELINES

## SOUTH KOREA

### GENERAL INFORMATION

The following health guidelines are based on years of experience, insights from our partners in-country, and current recommendations from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and from International SOS (ISOS). These guidelines are designed to inform you of health concerns that may be present in South Korea, especially as you venture to smaller cities off the usual tourist track or spend time in small villages and rural areas.

### USING THESE GUIDELINES

Please review these health guidelines and discuss this information with your healthcare provider.

These health guidelines complement other Experiment and external resources to help you prepare for a safe and healthy program. Please use the information here in conjunction with:

- Your Experiment South Korea Packing List
- Your Experimenter Handbook
- The Experiment Family Handbook
- [The Experiment Guide to Travel Vaccinations and Medications](#)
- [The Experiment Guide to Traveling with Allergies](#)
- [The CDC travel site for South Korea](#)
- [The Experiment's ISOS Member Portal](#) and Pre-Travel Support

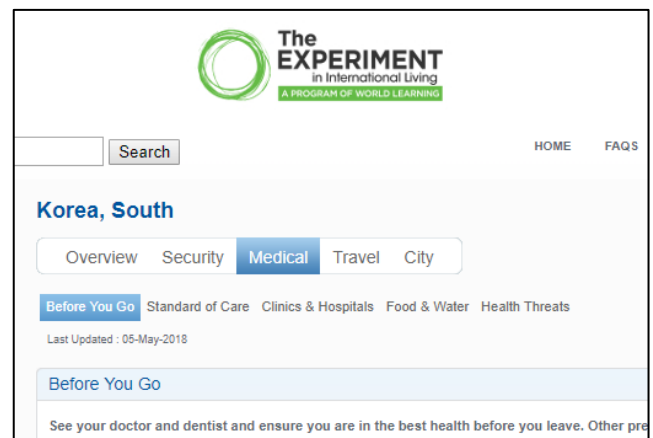
### ACCESSING THE ISOS MEMBER PORTAL

Through The Experiment's partnership with International SOS (ISOS), we are pleased to connect Experiment families with ISOS's extensive

resources. Please follow these steps for access:

1. Follow this [link to the ISOS Member Zone](#)
2. Enter **11BYCA639556** (not case-sensitive) under: "Already a Member?"
3. Choose your Experiment country from the drop menu in the light blue box on the left

On each country page, ISOS provides in-depth information on health concerns under the Medical Tab found immediately below the country name:



Please consult the "Before You Go" subtab for the most up-to-date vaccination and medication recommendations for South Korea.

For additional questions or clarification:

1. You can call the ISOS Philadelphia Assistance Center at: +1 215-942-8226.
2. Identify yourself as traveling with The Experiment and reference our member number: **11BYCA639556**.
3. It may help to specify that you are calling regarding travel plans for an adolescent. ISOS supports many business travelers as well as educational programs, and while many recommendations are relevant across age ranges, some may be different for individuals under age 18.

## **HEALTH RISKS IN SOUTH KOREA**

Health risks in South Korea include exposure to diseases through bug-bites, contaminated food or water in certain locations, and other infectious disease and environmental challenges. The following guidelines can help you mitigate these risks and stay healthy on your Experiment program.



## **BUG-VECTOR ILLNESSES**

Several diseases can be transmitted by bugs (such as mosquitos, ticks, flies, etc.) in South Korea. Many cannot be prevented with vaccines or medication, so preventing bug bites and exposure is the best way to reduce the risk of these illnesses.

### **CONCERNS:**

#### **Japanese Encephalitis**

Japanese encephalitis is a viral infection transmitted by mosquitos that bite between dusk and dawn (overnight). Many individuals infected with Japanese encephalitis develop no symptoms, but the disease can cause serious encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). A 2-dose vaccine is available for Japanese encephalitis and should be started no later than 6 weeks before traveling. Please consult the CDC and ISOS for current vaccination recommendations for Japanese encephalitis and discuss with your healthcare provider. Mosquito precautions remain important, independent of vaccination status, including limiting outside activity between dusk and dawn.

#### **Malaria**

Malaria is a protozoal infection transmitted by

mosquitos that bite between dusk and dawn (overnight). Malaria is characterized by fever and flu-like symptoms. There is no vaccine for malaria, but prophylactic medications are available. Malaria is present in rural areas in the northern provinces of Kyonggi, Kangwon, and Incheon, but not a concern in Experiment program locations. Mosquito precautions remain important. Please see [this map](#) for sample program locations.

#### **Scrub typhus**

Scrub typhus is a bacterial infection transmitted through the bites of infected chiggers (larval mites). Symptoms can include fever, headache, body ache, and rash and usually begin within 10 days of being bitten. There is no vaccine for scrub typhus. Bug precautions are the main prevention strategy.

#### **Tickborne encephalitis**

Tickborne encephalitis (TBE) is a viral infection transmitted by the bite of an infected tick. Symptoms can begin about two weeks after a tick bite, and include fever, headache, muscle ache, nausea, and fatigue. There is no FDA approved vaccine available for TBE; tick precautions are the main prevention strategy.

## **PREVENTION:**

For all the diseases listed above, bug exposure and bite prevention are crucial to reducing the risks to Experimenters' health. We recommend you take the following steps:

#### **Prevent bug exposure and bites:**

- Wear long sleeves, long pants, shoes, and hats to minimize exposed skin.
- Wear clothing and shoes treated with the repellent permethrin. (Permethrin is not for use directly on skin.)
- Use topical insect repellent regularly. (See recommendations below.)
- Avoid transiting tall grass, shrubs, or woody areas and check for ticks afterward.
- Consider using a bug net while sleeping. (Look for a net with fine mesh to exclude both mosquitos and sand flies.)

### Choose an appropriate insect repellent:

- PROTECTION AGAINST MULTIPLE BUGS (MOSQUITOS, TICKS, FLIES, ETC.): The CDC recommends a repellent which contains at least 20% DEET.
- PROTECTION AGAINST MOSQUITOES ONLY: Repellents other than DEET protect against mosquitos but may not be as effective against other bugs:
  - Picaridin (also known as KBR 3023, Bayrepel, and icaridin)
  - Oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE) or para-menthane-diol (PMD)
  - IR3535
  - 2-undecanone (methyl nonyl ketone)
- Always use repellents as directed.
- Please consult your healthcare provider if you have any health concerns regarding bug repellants.

### If bitten or exposed:

- Avoid scratching bug bites and apply hydrocortisone cream or calamine lotion to reduce itching.
- Check your entire body for ticks after outdoor activity.
- Let group leaders know immediately if you experience any symptoms on program (e.g. fever, aches, nausea, etc.)
- If you experience symptoms after program, please consult your healthcare provider and be sure to tell them about your travel.

## FOOD- AND WATER-BORNE ILLNESSES

Several diseases can be transmitted through food and water contaminated with microbes unfamiliar to your system. These illnesses can range from minor to moderate GI distress to serious conditions. Care in selecting safe food and water and hygienic practices for handling food and water are crucially important to limiting exposure.

## CONCERNS:

### Diarrhea-Producing Infections

Traveler's diarrhea is a common intestinal infection caused by contaminated food or water. Bacteria are responsible for most cases of traveler's diarrhea, though viruses and protozoa

account for a few. Fluid replacement is important with all cases of diarrhea to maintain hydration. Be sure drinks are from safe sources (see below) and avoid sugary drinks which can cause additional fluid loss in the intestines. For severe cases of dehydration, oral rehydration solutions (ORS) are recommended. Antidiarrheals such as Imodium or Lomotil may be effective short-term to relieve symptoms. Antibiotics may be indicated for persistent cases of diarrhea. Safe food, water, and hygiene practices as detailed below can help minimize risk of exposure to the microbes which can cause traveler's diarrhea.



### Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A is a viral disease that causes liver inflammation and can be transmitted through contaminated food and water. Symptoms can begin 2-8 weeks after exposure and may include fever, chills, fatigue, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, dark urine, and jaundice. A very effective vaccine is available and should be administered 2–3 weeks prior to travel. Many Experimenters may have already received this vaccine as part of their recommended childhood vaccination course. Please consult your healthcare provider. Safe food, water, and hygiene practices as detailed below remain important to minimize exposure to the Hepatitis A virus.

### Typhoid Fever

Typhoid is an infection caused by a salmonella bacterium that can be transmitted through contaminated food and water. Symptoms include high fever, weakness, stomach pain, headache, and loss of appetite. Typhoid vaccination (injection or oral) is not 100% effective and is not

a substitute for being careful about food and water. Please consult your healthcare provider. Safe food, water, and hygiene practices as detailed below remain important to minimize exposure to the salmonella bacterium that causes typhoid.

## PREVENTION:

Tap water is considered safe in South Korea.

If you are unsure of the food and water quality in the area you are visiting, check with a reliable source before using. You can protect your health in South Korea by observing the following food, water, and hygiene do's and don'ts:

### DO PRACTICE GOOD HYGIENE BY

- Washing your hands thoroughly with non-contaminated water and soap before meals and snacks. If handwashing is not possible, use hand sanitizer with > 60% alcohol.
- Avoiding touching your face, particularly the eyes, nose, and mouth. If you need to touch your face, wash your hands first.
- Not sharing water bottles, cups, or eating utensils and by washing personal equipment like water bottles regularly.
- Avoiding close contact with sick individuals.

### DO DRINK

- Bottled or canned beverages such as water, soda, or soft drinks from trusted sources. (Always ensure caps are sealed).
- Hot beverages such as coffee or tea.
- Water that has sustained a rolling boil for at least one minute at sea level and longer at higher elevations.
- Carbonated mineral water.

### DO EAT

- Cooked vegetables, fruits with thick covering such as citrus, bananas, and melons; well-washed raw fruits and vegetables.
- Meat or fish that is thoroughly cooked—pork and lamb should be very well done.
- Pasteurized dairy products from large commercial dairies.

- Food that has been freshly cooked and served hot; busier restaurants may be more likely to serve freshly cooked food.

### DON'T EAT OR DRINK

- Unwashed or pre-peeled raw fruits and vegetables, salads.
- Fruits that do not have a thick peel.
- Rare or raw meat, fish, or shellfish.
- Dairy products from small, independent vendors without pasteurizing facilities.
- Raw (unpasteurized) milk or milk products.
- Food of any kind that has been stored warm (e.g. over a chafing dish or bain marie) or left out in the sun.
- Well water or tap water outside major cities.
- Ice or drinks made with tap or well water.
- Flavored ice and popsicles.



There may be times when refusing an offer of food or beverage, even a drink with ice or avoiding a salad will be considered rude. You must use your best judgement in such circumstances. Polite refusals, thought out in advance, are often handy.



## OTHER DISEASES & HEALTH RISKS

Disease-causing pathogens can also be transmitted by animal exposure and contact with human bodily fluids, while environmental factors can exacerbate an illness or pose health risks in their own right. The following guidelines include a variety of strategies to keep you safe and healthy in South Korea.



## ANIMAL-VECTOR ILLNESSES

### Avian Influenza A (H5N1, H7N9, & other strains)

Avian influenza or “bird flu” is a viral infection that can spread from birds to humans but is not easily transmitted person-to-person. Symptoms are often similar to seasonal flu infections, including fever, cough, sore throat, muscle pain, and sometimes gastrointestinal distress. There are no vaccines for avian flu. No human cases of avian flu have been reported in South Korea, though cases have been reported in poultry. Experimenters should avoid contact with birds, including domestic poultry, and live birds and animals in markets. Only eat well-cooked poultry served hot, and practice good hygiene including regular and thorough hand washing before eating.

### Hantaviruses

Hantaviruses are carried by rodents and transmitted to humans when aerosolized particles of the animals’ saliva, urine, and feces are inhaled. Hantaviruses can cause two types of illness: hemorrhagic fever with renal failure syndrome (HFRS) and hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS). Early symptoms of HFRS can begin within a few days to a few weeks after exposure and include sudden fever, headache, muscle pain, and GI

upset. Early symptoms of HPS can begin 1-8 weeks after exposure and include fatigue, fever and muscle aches. There are no vaccines for hantaviruses, and avoidance of rodents and rodent nesting areas will minimize the risk of exposure.

### Rabies

Rabies is a viral disease transmitted by animal bites and scratches. Dogs and bats are common carriers of rabies, but a bite or scratch from any animal must be taken very seriously.

A pre-exposure vaccine is available for rabies— please consult the CDC and ISOS for the most current rabies vaccination recommendations for Korea and discuss with your healthcare provider. Note that pre-exposure vaccination *does not* eliminate the need for treatment if you are exposed, but vaccination does simplify the treatment you may require.

Regardless of vaccination status, the following steps are important for minimizing rabies exposure risk and for responding appropriately if you may have been exposed:

- Avoid contact with unknown animals and especially avoid handling or feeding puppies, kittens, bats, and monkey. They can have rabies before it is obvious.
- If you have been bitten, scratched, or have had direct contact with the saliva of a suspected rabid animal, immediately wash the affected area with a soap and water and a povidone-iodine solution if available. Then proceed **immediately** for post-exposure treatment.
- If possible, the animal should be captured and kept under cautious surveillance until the diagnosis and therapy are completed. If capture is not possible, a clear description of the animal and the circumstance of contact should be carefully recorded.

## AIR-BORNE ILLNESSES

### Tuberculosis

Tuberculosis (TB) is a bacterial infection spread by droplets coughed or sneezed into the air from an individual with active TB disease. Not everyone

exposed to or infected with TB virus will become sick; symptoms of active infection can include a cough, fever, fatigue, lack of appetite, weight loss, and night sweats. TB is present in South Korea; risk to travelers is considered low, as prolonged, close exposure to an infected individual is usually required to contract TB. Experimenters can reduce their chances of TB exposure in Korea by limiting time spent in crowded locations, avoiding individuals with coughs, and practicing good hygiene.



## BLOOD-BORNE ILLNESSES

Diseases transmitted through contact with blood or other bodily fluids are concerns throughout the world, including South Korea. Universal precautions against contact with any other individual's bodily fluids including blood, vomit, sexual contact, etc. should be practiced at all times. This includes refraining from body piercings and tattooing while abroad, as prohibited by The Experiment's Code of Conduct.

### Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is a serious and often chronic viral infection of the liver, transmitted by bodily fluid contact. Universal precautions are essential to prevent Hepatitis B transmission. Vaccination series of two or three injections given over six months are available. Many Experimenters may have already received the Hepatitis B vaccine as part of their recommended childhood vaccination course. If an Experimenter is not vaccinated for Hepatitis B, they may begin a vaccination series before travel and receive the final dose after travel.

Please consult your healthcare provider.

### HIV

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a concern worldwide, transmitted by bodily fluid contact. Those infected with HIV can develop Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) that can result in life-threatening infections. There is no vaccine for HIV—universal precautions are essential to prevent HIV transmission.

## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

The Experiment Korea program involves active, outdoor elements and accompanying environmental health challenges. Proactive self-care and awareness can mitigate health risks from environmental factors.

### Air Quality

In major cities in South Korea, poor air quality can cause respiratory distress or illness. Experimenters with histories of asthma, allergies, or chronic respiratory ailments should consult with their healthcare provider regarding their particular concerns. Any Experimenters traveling with rescue medications (e.g. albuterol inhalers) should plan to carry these medications at all times. Smog masks may help minimize exposure to air pollution; please consult your healthcare provider.

### Dehydration

Dehydration occurs when the body is losing fluid faster than it can be replaced. This can be extreme in cases of diarrhea or vomiting, or gradual in cases of exertion without adequate fluid intake. South Korea can be quite hot in the summer months; the body will lose fluid through sweat, and consistent hydration remains important. Experimenters should drink safe water or other safe beverages regularly and should avoid excessive sugary or caffeinated beverages as these can increase fluid loss. Chugging water bottles or beverages should also be avoided, as this can rapidly change the electrolyte balance in the body, causing additional problems. Consistent fluid consumption in small sips is best.

## Sun Exposure

Experimenters in South Korea spend a great deal of time outside and are susceptible to sunburn. Coverage with clothing and appropriate sunscreen (SPF 30+) is the best way to protect skin and prevent burns. Please consult your Experiment South Korea packing list for clothing and sunscreen recommendations.

## GENERAL HEALTH & WELLNESS

Taking good care of your health while traveling is important for getting the most out of your Experiment program:

- Practice good hygiene
- Get plenty of sleep
- Eat regular, balanced meals
- Reach out to your group leader if you feel unwell at any time

## VACCINATIONS FOR SOUTH KOREA

For current travel vaccination recommendations for South Korea, please reference:

- [The CDC travel site for South Korea](#)
- [The Experiment's ISOS Member Portal](#) and Pre-Travel Support

(Instructions for logging into the ISOS Member Portal can be found on page 1 of this guide.)

Please also reference [The Experiment Guide to Travel Vaccinations and Medications](#) for additional information and answers to frequently asked questions about vaccinations and medications. Please note that the Guide to Travel Vaccinations and Medications is a general resource for all Experiment programs and is designed to complement the recommendations of the CDC and ISOS, as well as the information provided here.

Please consult your healthcare provider when considering travel vaccinations or medications.

**The following vaccinations are required for participations in all Experiment programs:**

- *MMR (measles, mumps, rubella)*: Two doses of MMR or individual vaccination against measles, mumps, and rubella are required. The MMRV

combination vaccine is acceptable for both MMR and Varicella requirements.

- *Varicella (chicken pox)*: Two doses of the varicella vaccine or history of chicken pox are required. The MMRV combination vaccine is acceptable for both MMR and Varicella requirements.
- *Tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis*: The primary child series is required and a current booster are required. Boosters (Td or Tdap) are effective for 10 years.



**Enjoy your trip! Please note that these robust guidelines are intended to help ensure that you have a healthy and memorable Experiment to South Korea.**