

# WORLD LEARNING PROGRAM HEALTH GUIDELINES & REQUIREMENTS: GHANA

## BRIEF SUMMARY

### Prior to Departure:

- Schedule an appointment with your health care provider or a travel medicine clinic at least 8 weeks prior to departure. Please note that some vaccines are only available at travel medicine clinics.
- Take an adequate quantity of all your prescription and non-prescription medications to last your entire stay.
- Ensure you are up to date on all routine vaccines. Routine vaccines that should be up to date prior to traveling include: Covid 19, varicella (chicken pox), hepatitis A & B, HPV, influenza, meningococcal, measles/mumps/rubella (MMR), polio, and tetanus/diphtheria/pertussis (TDaP).
- Discuss your specific travel itinerary (including various in-country locations you plan to visit) with your health care provider. We recommend you ask about and discuss:
  - Are you up to date on your routine vaccines including all boosters?
  - Are there additional vaccines recommended or required in Ghana? These may include but are not limited to:
    - **Meningococcal, Rabies, Typhoid, Polio, Yellow Fever**
  - Plan for the prevention and treatment of traveler's diarrhea.
- World Learning recommends that the International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis (ICVP,) also known as the yellow WHO card, along with a copy of your immunization record should be kept with your passport so that it is easily accessible.
- It is essential that you review these health guidelines and requirements with your health care provider and discuss individual issues such as pre-existing medical problems and allergies to specific drugs.
- Review **Before You Go** recommendations from [International SOS](https://www.experiment.org/planning-documents/) (member portal access instructions can be found with your program-specific planning documents here: <https://www.experiment.org/planning-documents/>)

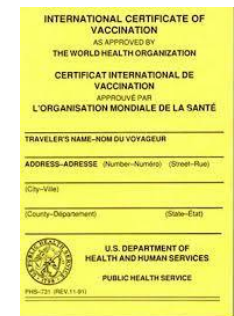
- Any further questions or concerns should be directed to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)- [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel) - or to your own health care provider.

### While You Are in Ghana:

- Remember motor vehicle accidents remain the biggest risk for international travelers. Ride in the back seat, if possible, wear seatbelts, and do not be afraid to ask your driver to slow down.
- Take preventive measures to avoid mosquito, tick, and other insect bites.
- Take measures to prevent traveler's diarrhea.
- Do not travel alone and always maintain an awareness of your surroundings.
- Use condoms if you are sexually active.
- While traveling abroad, minimize high-risk behaviors.
- **All participants with potential anaphylactic allergic reactions are required to bring at least two epi-pens with them to their program.**
- Notify your Program staff if you become ill.

## IMMUNIZATIONS

- Yellow Fever
  - Yellow fever vaccine is REQUIRED for entry into Ghana. Plan well in advance for the yellow fever inoculation since it is not as widely available as other vaccines.



## GENERAL INFORMATION

Maintaining good health and safety is a critical element of your successful participation in any World Learning program. While traveling abroad students should always use caution in unfamiliar places and circumstances. Access to emergency care abroad may not be what you are used to at home. A review of health, safety and security information will be provided to students upon arrival in the host country.

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To protect your health in Ghana, you may need certain pre-departure immunizations followed by reasonable health precautions while in the country. The following health guidelines and requirements are based on years of experience and the current recommendations from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. They are designed to inform you of health concerns that may be present in Ghana.

Although no information sheet can address every conceivable contingency, the following health guidelines and requirements are an attempt to provide you with a standard, which if followed, should optimize good health during your stay abroad.

## PREVENTION OF INSECT BORNE ILLNESS

### Personal Protective Measures (for mosquitos and other insects):

For all the diseases listed below, bug exposure and bite prevention are crucial to reducing the risks to travelers' 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.)
- Choose an appropriate insect repellent and use it regularly:
- 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 (SkinSoSoft)
  - 2-undecanone (methyl nonyl ketone)
- Always use repellents as directed.

- Please consult your healthcare provider if you have any health concerns regarding bug repellants. (See recommendations above.)
- Avoid transiting tall grass, shrubs, or woody areas and check for ticks afterward.
- Consider using a mosquito net while sleeping.
- Check your entire body for ticks after outdoor activity.
- If you experience symptoms after the program, please consult your healthcare provider and be sure to tell them about your travel.

### Malaria:

Malaria is present in Ghana and prophylaxis is recommended. Malaria is a disease caused by a parasite. Mosquitoes spread the parasite to people when they bite them. Malaria symptoms usually appear within 7 to 30 days but can take up to one year to develop. Symptoms may include high fevers, shaking chills, and flu-like illness. Without treatment, malaria can cause severe illness and death.

CDC guidelines suggest that prevention of malaria is possible if you carefully follow personal protective measures as described below and take an antimalarial drug as directed by your health care provider. You and your health care provider should decide which medication is best for you based on your health history and where you are traveling. If, despite adherence to these preventive measures, you develop symptoms of malaria, prompt medical attention may lessen the severity of the illness.

**World Learning suggests that if you have further questions, visit the CDC website:** <http://www.cdc.gov/malaria/travelers/index.html>

### Yellow Fever:

Yellow fever is a viral disease transmitted by mosquitoes that occurs only in parts of Africa and South America. Ghana is in the yellow fever endemic zone. Most people infected with yellow fever virus do not get sick or have only mild symptoms. People who do get sick will start having symptoms (e.g., fever, chills, headache, backache, and muscle aches) 3–6 days after they are infected. About 12% of people who have symptoms go on to develop serious illness: jaundice, bleeding, shock, organ failure, and sometimes death.

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Yellow fever may be prevented by avoiding mosquito bites (following the personal protective measures listed above) and by getting the vaccination that is available at any yellow fever vaccination center. Please consult your health care provider for the nearest center as this vaccine may be required to enter the country.


Note that after you leave a country with Yellow fever such as Ghana, other countries may require you to show proof of yellow fever vaccination. Countries do this as a public health measure to keep travelers from importing the virus.

## PREVENTION OF FOOD/WATER BORNE ILLNESS

### Diarrhea Producing Infections:

"Traveler's diarrhea" is the most common form of travel related illness. In otherwise healthy adults, diarrhea is rarely serious or life-threatening, but it can make a trip very unpleasant. The diarrhea may last several days and is characterized by watery, non-bloody bowel movements. Traveler's diarrhea usually requires no treatment other than fluid replacement by drinking plenty of water or using an Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) to prevent dehydration. ORS can be purchased as a prepacked solution. Antidiarrheals such as Imodium or Lomotil may be used short-term in some circumstances as long as the traveler stays well hydrated and has no bloody stools or abdominal pain. Pepto Bismol can be used to treat diarrhea, but large quantities are required. Antibiotics may be indicated for more severe cases of traveler's diarrhea especially if the traveler has fever or stools with blood or mucous. Ask your health care provider before your program begins for their recommendations regarding traveler's diarrhea.

More protracted and disabling diarrheal illnesses may be due to giardiasis, dysentery, cholera, and typhoid. Other diseases such as hepatitis A are also transmitted via contaminated food and water. These infections as well as "traveler's diarrhea" are often caused by contaminated food and water. Therefore, the best way to decrease your risk of such infections is by sticking to safe food and water habits including the following:



**WASH** your hands scrupulously with non-contaminated water and soap before eating.

**DRINK:**


- Bottled water that is sealed
- Water that has been disinfected
- Ice made with bottled or disinfected water
- Carbonated drinks
- Hot coffee or tea
- Pasteurized milk

**PURIFY YOUR WATER** if it is not bottled or from a reliable source. Options for purification include...

- Boiling: bring to a full rolling boil for 1 min (3 min at elevations over 6,500 ft)
- Disinfectants such as iodide and chlorine dioxide (follow the manufacturer's instructions)
- Filtration devices and UV light (follow the manufacturer's instructions)

**DO EAT:**

- Food that is cooked and served hot
- Hard-cooked eggs
- Fruits and vegetables you have washed in clean water or peeled yourself
- Pasteurized dairy products



**DO NOT DRINK:**

- Tap or well water
- Ice made with tap or well water
- Drinks made with tap or well water (such as reconstituted juice)
- Unpasteurized milk

**DO NOT EAT:**

- Food served at room temperature
- Food from street vendors
- Raw or soft-cooked (runny) eggs
- Raw or undercooked (rare) meat or fish
- Unwashed or unpeeled raw fruits and vegetables
- Unpasteurized dairy products
- "Bushmeat" (monkeys, bats, or other wild game)

*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 decide for yourself, but polite refusals, thought out in advance, are often handy. Discuss these alternatives with your Program staff.*

## A Note on Swimming...

Avoid swimming or wading in fresh water. Many parasites and bacteria live in fresh water and can cause serious illness. If you are unsure about the safety in the area you are visiting, check with a reliable source before swimming. Properly chlorinated pools and salt water are generally safe from infectious diseases.

## OTHER HEALTH CONCERNS

### Sun Exposure:

World Learning recommends the use of sunglasses, wide-brimmed hats, sunscreen lotions, and lip protection to reduce problems related to sun exposure.

### Air Quality:

Students with a history of asthma, other lung disease or allergies should be warned that air pollution may be worse than you are used to, causing more symptoms while you are traveling. Asthmatics should carry emergency medicines for severe asthma attacks.

### 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 especially in hot climates and at high altitude. Travelers should drink safe water or other safe beverages regularly and should avoid excessive sugary or caffeinated beverages as these can increase fluid loss. Consistent fluid consumption throughout the day is best.



*World Learning is committed to supporting the emotional and physical wellbeing of all students. If you have any questions or concerns about any of these health guidelines, please reach out to the Student Health Office associated with your upcoming Program.*