

'TIS THE SEASON:

Holiday Traveler's Advice for Preventing the Spread of Infectious Disease

Traveling home for the holidays?

If you aren't careful, you could end up bringing home an uninvited guest to meet the family: infectious disease.

In addition to monitoring the weather for possible delays, squeezing everyone's gifts into your suitcase and bagging your carry-on liquids for the plane trip, travelers should take a few extra steps to protect themselves from germs and viruses while traveling:

▷ **Get vaccinated.** Immunization can drastically reduce your chances of contracting many infectious diseases. Before you travel, make sure you, your family members and loved ones have gotten their seasonal flu shot.

▷ **Keep hydrated.** Drink lots of water before and during your flight.

- ▷ **Try to catch some sleep on the way.** Most of us get sick when we are stressed or tired. Catching some ZZZs on the plane, train or bus, might help you to stave off a little of that exhaustion.
- ▷ **Bring a scarf or a small blanket.** Packing a small blanket, scarf or sweatshirt in your carry-on bag will allow you to bundle up when you get cold without using blankets that have been who knows where.
- ▷ **Keep your hands clean.** You've heard it before and you'll hear it again: The best thing you can do to prevent the spread of germs and protect your health is to regularly wash your hands with warm water and soap.
- ▷ **If you are flying, turn up the air.** While there has been speculation that the forced-air systems in planes spread germs, experts say the air vents above your seat on planes can help push away the germs that might float into your space.
- ▷ **Keep to your schedule.** As best you can, try not to change your daily habits. Eat the same breakfast, work out the same amount and avoid over- or under-sleeping.
- ▷ **Watch for symptoms.** After your return home, monitor your health. If you become ill with a fever, cough, sore throat, shortness in breath or any other of the regular symptoms of the flu, call your doctor.