

13 Jul 2023

Country Focus: United States of America (USA)

Visiting the USA

Most travellers enjoy a safe and easy trip, but awareness of possible health risks in the USA helps reduce your chance of illness or injury.

Potential hazards include contaminated food and water, sun damage and in some USA states; high altitude and extreme temperatures.

Be aware of road safety and remember driving rules can be different. Make sure you are familiar with the road rules for the USA region you are visiting.

[Mosquito spread](#) illnesses like [West Nile virus](#) or more rarely [dengue](#) and infections spread by ticks such as [Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever](#) are a risk in some parts of the USA.

In June and July 2023, seven locally acquired cases of malaria were confirmed; six in Florida and one in Texas. Before these cases in 2023, the last reported local malaria cases in Florida were in 2003 [1].

Advice for travellers

Before you go

See our USA Country Information page for up to date health advice.

Check [Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office \(FCDO\): USA](#) country advice for entry requirements and security information. You can [sign up for FCDO email updates about the USA](#).

If you have any medical conditions, get advice from your GP or hospital specialist before you go to help you manage your health during your trip.

If you take regular medicines, see our advice about [travelling with medication](#). For certain medicines, such as controlled drugs, you may need to apply for a [special license](#). If you are unsure about your medicine or think you might need to apply for a license, [contact the USA embassy or consulate nearest to you](#).

Remember - unlike the United Kingdom (UK) healthcare in the USA is not free. Get comprehensive [travel health insurance](#); check out the [Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office](#) insurance advice and remember to pack your insurance documents.

See your GP, practice nurse, pharmacist or travel clinic to make sure all your recommended routine UK vaccines, including [polio, diphtheria and tetanus](#) and [measles, mumps and rubella \(MMR\)](#) are up to date.

There is a low risk of [rabies](#) in the USA. Contact with [bats](#) is the main reason for human rabies in the USA, although any animal, including wild or domestic animals and pets, can carry rabies [2]. As well as bats, other [wild animals that carry rabies](#) in the USA are raccoons, skunks and foxes [3].

If you are planning contact with wild animals in the USA, especially bats or foxes, get advice about rabies vaccine before you go. If you have a course of rabies vaccine, remember to take your vaccine records with you.

Carry a basic [first aid kit](#).

While you are away

Any long journey, including a long haul flight, can increase your risk of [venous thromboembolism \(VTE\)](#) or deep vein thrombosis, so:

- Walk around as much as possible during your journey.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Avoid stowing hand luggage under your seat as it restricts movement.
- Regularly flex and extend your ankles to encourage blood flow.
- Avoid constrictive clothing around your waist or legs.

Make sure you know the [signs and symptoms of VTE](#) and get emergency medical help if you have any symptoms.

Be aware of your [personal safety](#) and check local and national government advice and FCDO USA country information regularly during your trip.

Temperatures can be high in some regions, so remember to drink plenty of fluids and [protect yourself from the sun](#) by wearing appropriate clothing, sunglasses, and applying high-factor sunscreen.

Take care with eating and drinking and [follow basic food hygiene rules](#).

Follow [insect and tick bite avoidance advice](#) including using effective insect repellents and wearing long sleeves/trousers. Remember to check for ticks and make sure you know how to [remove ticks](#) correctly.

Rabies

Remember:

- Avoid contact with all animals, regardless of whether you received pre-travel rabies vaccine or not.
- Following a bite, scratch or any potential exposure, wash the wound site, follow immediate [first aid advice](#) and seek urgent medical help, even if the wound/exposure appears trivial.
- If you find a bat in your bedroom, you must also get urgent medical help.

When you return

If you are ill within weeks or even months of your trip, particularly if you have fever or flu-like symptoms with diarrhoea, get urgent medical help. Remember to tell your doctor you travelled to the USA.

If you had a possible rabies exposure always see your GP when you get back. Even if you had treatment in the USA, you may need further rabies vaccine doses. Remember to bring any vaccine or treatment records to your appointment. If treatment was not started when you were away, your GP can get expert advice to see if you need to start it in the UK.

Resources

- [Altitude illness](#)
- [GOV.UK: Driving abroad](#)
- [NHS: Can I take my medicines abroad?](#)
- [NHS: DVT \(deep vein thrombosis\)](#)
- [Sun protection](#)
- [Rabies risk worldwide: practical advice during rabies vaccine shortages](#)
- [UK Health Security Agency: Beat the heat: staying safe in hot weather](#)
- [Wildfires and industrial fires](#)

References

1. [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Locally Acquired Cases of Malaria in Florida and Texas. Last reviewed 7 July 2023. \[Accessed 13 July 2023\]](#)
2. [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Avoid risk of rabies from bats. Last reviewed 22 March 2023. \[Accessed 13 July 2023\]](#)
3. [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Rabies. Last review 8 December 2023. \[Accessed 13 July 2023\]](#)