

# Fit to Travel and Work Abroad

As an expat or a family member of an expat you probably travel a lot, for both work and pleasure. However, extensive travel can pose health hazards, particularly when you travel to exotic destinations, or when you are exposed to less exacting standards of hygiene or infectious diseases, or when you have to contend with different climates and time zones.

For all these reasons it is important to remain alert and take the necessary precautions. And this is where KLM Health Services can help.

## The Hazards of Business Travel

All too often employers and employees think too lightly of the health risks involved with travelling. The reality, unfortunately, is that an illness during a journey can be both inconvenient and very unpleasant. According to the 2008 Schiphol Survey, between one and two out of every ten travellers visit tropical regions without taking effective anti-malaria measures, and half of all travellers still start out on their journeys with inadequate protection. The death of a Dutch traveller of malaria in November 2008, for example, could probably have been avoided. This survey also highlighted the importance of being well-informed. This has now resulted in 20% more travellers being protected against hepatitis A.

The risks that confront business travellers are extremely diverse in nature and depend on the destination, the duration and frequency of travel, the nature of the work carried out and the state of the traveller's health. A few of these potential risks are outlined below:

- The bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites in tropical regions are different from what we are accustomed to in western countries. They can cause infectious diseases

such as dengue fever, malaria, yellow fever and diphtheria. Nowadays, we also have to contend with new illnesses such as the new influenza A (H1N1) and bird flu.

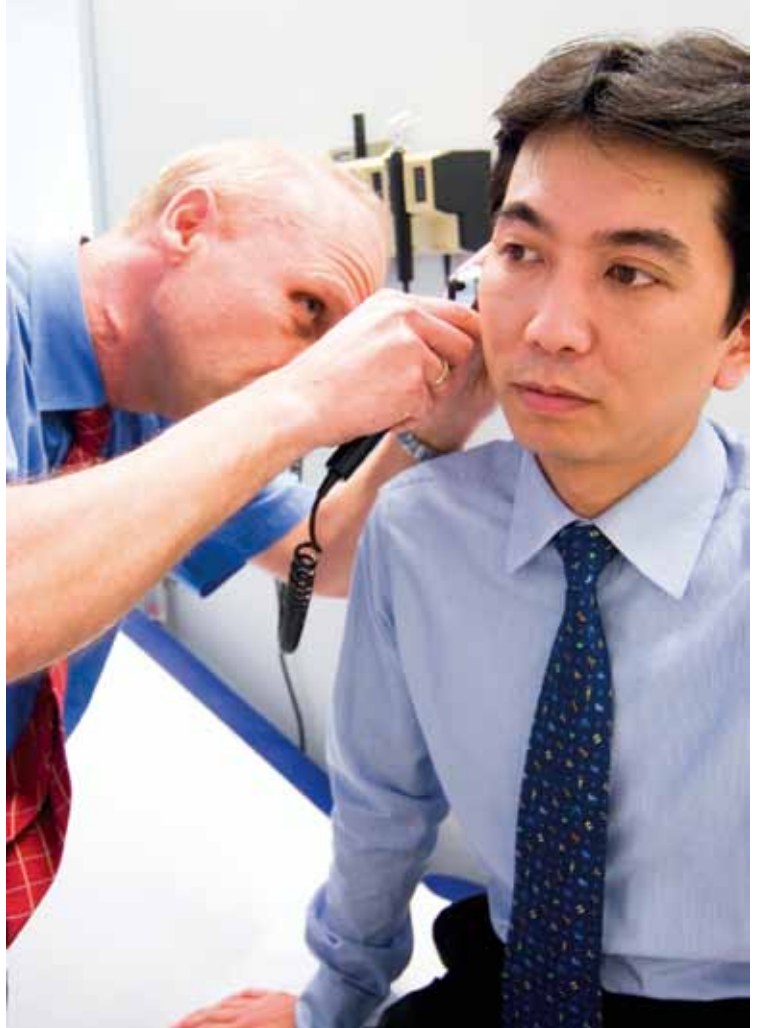
- Crossing several time zones can cause fatigue, particularly when stress is involved. When it comes to our biological clock, the human body can only cope with a shift of approximately an hour-and-a-half to two hours in one day, at the most. It is no coincidence that more accidents occur on the roads after the transition to summertime, mainly as a result of increased stress. Moreover, the incidence of heart attacks increases by five percent in the first week after this transition (source: University of Groningen, Professor Dr D. Beersma, 24/03/09).
- Sitting for prolonged periods during a long flight can disrupt the flow of blood to the legs, increasing the likelihood of a thrombosis.
- A lack of hygiene in kitchens and hotels can lead to abdominal and stomach complaints and diarrhoea, which can also, incidentally, be caused by drinking contaminated water.



### Taking Care of KLM's Travelling Personnel

KLM entrusts the health care of its flight crew, business travellers and expats to KLM Health Services, a travel organisation with specific expertise in the area of travel and health. This organisation keeps employees informed on the risks and on the preventative measures that they can take. These include vaccinations, malaria prevention, the consequences of poor hygiene, sleeping and waking patterns and safety aspects. KLM Health Services provides the latest, up-to-the-minute information about a certain destination immediately before departure. In the case of the new influenza A (H1N1), for example, the flight crew and other KLM employees were given daily updates about the situation and the measures they could take. In addition to all this, at Air France-KLM-Delta destinations around the world, the company has a network of local doctors that meet KLM's quality requirements. In the event of medical problems, employees can make use of this network of doctors, or indeed, fall back on the medical telephone helpline at Schiphol. Moreover, because pilots and expats undergo periodical medical examinations, any potential health issues or problems can quickly be identified. If an actual health problem is discovered, the relevant treatment is swiftly administered, in collaboration with specialised hospitals. Preventative hygiene audits are also carried out at Air France-KLM-Delta destinations and, in collaboration with KLM, KLM Health Services sets up policies for dealing with health risks, such as the repercussions of a pandemic. These measures can be broken down into the various stages of a journey: the preparation prior to departure; the journey itself; and upon returning home.

This broad approach leads to a greater level of awareness among employees of the health risks. It also provides a sense of reassurance: if employees have health problems, they know



they can always fall back on the medical care that is available specifically to them.

### Experience with Other Organisations

In addition to KLM, KLM Health Services also works for other international clients, such as development organisations, international companies, other airlines and offshore companies. In organisations in which travelling is not part of the core business, the responsibility for health and travel often rests with the individual employee. These companies run risks, particularly when the frequency of travel is significant, if they do not take enough or any preventative measures at all, and are totally dependent on the available help and information in the event of a calamity. Market research has shown that employers are keen to have their employees properly taken care of by a professional organisation such as KLM Health Services.

### Travel healthily... and a Healthy Return!

This is the slogan of KLM Health Services, and is probably also one that echoes your own sentiments and those of your employees! Contact KLM Health Services and arrange for them to drop by and present themselves and their health care services that are ideally suited to your organisation.

Contact: KLM Health Services - [www.klmhealthservices.nl](http://www.klmhealthservices.nl) -  
Telephone: 0800 22 555 47, or, from outside  
the Netherlands: +31 20 649 6040. - E-mail: [contact.health@klm.com](mailto:contact.health@klm.com)

