Argentina: Public Health in Urban Environments

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General Information
To protect your health in Argentina, you 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 U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It is designed to inform you of health concerns that may be present in Argentina especially as you venture to smaller cities off the usual tourist track, or spend time in small villages and rural areas for extended periods. 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.

You may find that local customs and practice, as well as varying U.S. physicians' approaches, at times conflict with these guidelines. We recommend that you review these Health Guidelines and Requirements with your physician, particularly in order to discuss individual issues such as pre-existing medical problems and allergies to particular drugs. Any further questions or concerns should be directed to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta (Web site: http://www.cdc.gov/travel) or your own physician.

Prevention of Insect-Borne Illness
Dengue Fever: This is a viral disease and is transmitted by mosquitoes which bite primarily in the daytime. Low risk exists in the city of Buenos Aires. There is no licensed vaccine against it, but personal protective measures against mosquito bites are effective in prevention. Insect repellents, protective clothing such as long-sleeved shirts and pants, plus the use of permethrin-treated mosquito netting are therefore essential. The disease causes considerable discomfort (fever, body aching), but is self-limited in adults in most cases.

Yellow Fever: This is a viral disease transmitted by mosquitoes that occurs only in parts of Africa and South America. Yellow fever is characterized by severe hepatitis with fever. It may be prevented by avoiding mosquito bites (personal protective measures) and by getting the vaccination shots that are available at any yellow fever vaccination center (consult your physician for the nearest center). Immunization is recommended if you are traveling during your ISP and/or after the program to Jujuy, Salta, Formosa, Corrientes, and Misiones including Iguazu Falls resorts.
Prevention of Food and Water-Borne Illness

Tap water is generally safe to drink and cook with in Buenos Aires and other major cities and it is usually safe as well to eat fresh fruits, vegetables, salads and put ice in your drinks. Food and water safety however, cannot be guaranteed from street food purchases and the water quality is variable in rural areas.

If you are unsure of the food and water quality in the area that you are visiting, check with a reliable source before using. If in any doubt, and for visits to rural areas, take all the recommended precautions and respect certain dos and don’ts:

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

DO DRINK
- Bottled or canned beverages (water, soda, soft drinks, beer, wine) from a trusted source (ensure caps are sealed).
- Water that has been boiled for 5 minutes at sea level (longer at higher altitudes).
- Carbonated mineral water (to increase the likelihood that the bottle was opened by you and not filled at the tap).

DO USE
- Commercial iodide or tinctured liquid iodine to treat water, only if boiling water is not possible and bottled water (from a trusted source) is not available. Chlorine in various forms is less reliable than iodine. If not outdated, these provide substantial protection when added to tap water.

DO EAT
- Cooked vegetables and fruits with thick covering (citrus, bananas, and melons); these should first be washed with soap and rinsed in boiled water before cutting with your own clean dry knife; also, thoroughly wash your hands before touching food. Other vegetables and unpeeled fruits can be eaten if soaked for 30 minutes in iodine solution the color of weak tea.
- Meat or fish that is thoroughly cooked (pork and lamb should be very well done).
- Pasteurized dairy products from large commercial dairies.

DON’T EAT
- Raw vegetables including salads; rinsing them in water will not clean them unless extraordinary measures are taken, not usual in most restaurants.
- Fruits that do not have a thick, disposable outside covering.
- Rare or raw meat or fish or shellfish.
- Dairy products from small, independent vendors without pasteurizing facilities, including food of any kind that has been left out in the sun, especially custards, creams, and mayonnaise.
- Raw (un-pasteurized) milk or milk products. Tuberculosis and brucellosis, both serious diseases are transmitted in this way, so the consumption of un-pasteurized milk and milk products should be strictly avoided.

Residents of our host country may be quite sensitive to the implications that their food and water are not safe for consumption. Due to acquired immunity over generations of exposure, our hosts may not be at risk of becoming ill from consumption of local food and water. There may be times when refusing an offer of a drink with ice, or avoiding the salad, will be considered rude. Even the most careful travelers may have to consider compromise on these occasions, or in instances where alternative food and beverages are not available. You must decide for yourself, but excuses, thought out in advance, are often handy. Discuss these alternatives with your Academic Director(s).

Diarrhea-producing infections: There is minimal to moderate incidence of diarrhea among travelers in Argentina. “Traveler’s diarrhea” is a self-limited diarrhea lasting from a few to several days, characterized by watery, non-bloody bowel movements. Traveler’s diarrhea usually requires no treatment other than fluid replacement including ORS (World Health Organization’s Oral Rehydration Solution which comes in package form). Fluid replacement for more severe diarrhea could require up to 3–4 liters initially over 2–6 hours, followed by 8–12 ounces for each subsequent loose stool. Antidiarrheals such as Imodium or Lomotil...
may be used short-term in some circumstances. Pepto Bismol in large amounts and certain antibiotics (doxycycline, sulfa-TMP, ciprofloxacin) can prevent or attenuate the infection. Antibiotics are indicated for more severe cases of traveler’s diarrhea.

**A note on swimming:** Avoid swimming or wading in fresh water. Many parasites and bacteria live in water and can cause serious illness. Properly chlorinated pools and salt water are generally safe from infectious diseases.

**Typhoid Fever:** Typhoid is an infection caused by a particular species of the salmonella bacterium. It is spread by contaminated food and water. Symptoms include fever, severe toxicity, rash, and in about half the cases, bloody diarrhea. Untreated, there is a 30% mortality rate. Vaccines are 60–70% effective in prevention. One vaccine involves a single injection, with immunity lasting 2 years. A second one is administered orally every other day for 4 doses, and lasts 5 years. Antibiotic resistance has been developing, but treatment of the disease with certain well-known antibiotics is usually effective. As with all diarrheal illnesses, careful dietary discretion continues to be the main line of defense.

**Hepatitis A:** Hepatitis A is a highly contagious virus that causes liver inflammation. It is most commonly spread through contaminated food and water. Most Americans have not previously been exposed to the hepatitis A virus and are at risk of contracting the disease during travel to areas where the disease is more prevalent. A very effective vaccine is available and should be administered 2–3 weeks prior to travel.

**Other Diseases**

**Rabies:** Rabies is a viral disease almost always caused by animal bites (especially dogs and bats). Risk is mostly limited to Salta and Jujuy provinces. Nevertheless, **strict adherence to the following is important for a safe and rabies-free experience:**

- Avoid bites from all animals and especially avoid handling or feeding puppies, kittens, monkeys or other animals. They can have rabies before it is obvious.
- If you have been bitten or have had direct contact with the saliva of a suspected rabid animal, immediately wash the affected area with a soap solution and running water thoroughly to neutralize and to rinse out the virus. **Then proceed immediately for post-exposure treatment,** the sooner the better; depending on the location of the bite, you may have little time.

- If at all 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.

**Tuberculosis:** Tuberculosis (TB) is a bacterial disease spread by airborne droplets from a person with untreated pulmonary TB or by ingestion of TB-contaminated unpasteurized milk products. Transmission is more likely in conditions of crowding and poverty. A TB skin test can indicate prior exposure to tuberculosis and is required prior to travel (unless already known to be positive). A repeat test is recommended after returning to the US even if the pre-departure test was negative.

**Hepatitis B:** Hepatitis B is a serious and often chronic viral infection of the liver. Since this type of hepatitis is most often acquired from contact with infected blood, or sexual contact (as with HIV), or from skin-to-skin contact of mutual open cuts and sores, appropriate precautions to avoid these types of exposure are necessary. This includes avoiding tattooing, ear/body piercing, and cuddling children with sores and draining insect bites. A series of three immunizing injections is recommended after returning to the US even if the pre-departure test was negative.

**AIDS and Blood Supplies:** AIDS is a concern worldwide. AIDS is an acquired immune deficiency that can result in life-threatening infections. The HIV virus is transmitted by way of bodily fluids from an infected person. Abstinence is the surest way to prevent contracting the disease via sexual transmission. It is the student’s responsibility to protect him/herself from acquiring the disease through sexual transmission. Condoms are generally available abroad but may not be of good quality. Students anticipating even the possibility of sexual activity are strongly urged to bring their own condom supply. Other potential routes of infected blood transmission such as tattooing, body piercing and needle sharing must be strictly avoided.

With regard to blood transfusions, our Academic Directors have identified hospitals, through consultation with the local US embassy, where safe blood is available. In a life-threatening situation, the risks versus benefits of
an emergency blood transfusion must be examined carefully and a decision made based on the best information at hand.

Immunizations for Argentina

Immunizations fall under two categories: 1) those that are required for SIT Study Abroad admission and 2) those that are recommended to protect your health and well-being by building up your immune defenses against specific prevalent diseases. In addition, certain basic immunizations are required by US law.

In the case of Argentina, no immunizations are required for entry into the country from the US or vice versa. However, several are strongly recommended to protect your own health, or may even be required if you are visiting other countries just before or after visiting Argentina.

Plan ahead at least 7 weeks, as laid out in the schedule at the end of these instructions—since some require more than one dose for effectiveness. The physician administering the inoculations should record all immunizations on the International Certificate of Vaccination (also known as the WHO card). The WHO card is to be with you at all times while in the host country.

REQUIRED

- **MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella):** You will need to be immunized if you have not had 2 doses of live measles vaccine.

- **Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Pertussis:** The primary child series is required. Boosters (Td or Tdap) are effective for 10 years. If you are uncertain when you had your last injection, we recommend that you get another booster and enter it on your WHO card.

RECOMMENDED

- **Hepatitis A:** Hepatitis A vaccine, which provides long term immunity, is recommended. It needs to be given at least 3 weeks prior to departure, with a booster at 6 months to one year.

- **Hepatitis B:** A series of 3 immunization injections is required. See section on Hepatitis B.

- **Influenza:** Influenza vaccine should be considered for any individual wishing to decrease risk of influenza or non-specific respiratory illness—especially those who are at high risk for complications from influenza including those with asthma, COPD, diabetes, chronic cardiovascular disease and immunocompromised conditions.

- **Typhoid:** This vaccine is strongly urged as a viable protective measure. The vaccine is given either orally or by injection. Discuss the relative merit of each with your doctor.

Immunization Schedule for Argentina

To assist your planning, we suggest the following schedule for required and recommended immunizations. For your own comfort and protection, do not leave shots to the last minute!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before the start of program</th>
<th>Immunizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 weeks</td>
<td>Influenza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 weeks</td>
<td>Typhoid (injection or oral)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 weeks</td>
<td>Diphtheria/Tetanus, if req.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>Hepatitis A vaccine</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

With reasonable attention to health and hygiene rules, your stay in Argentina should be a healthy one. Aside from minor ailments due to adjustments to the new food, water and climate, the large majority of SIT Study Abroad students remain healthy throughout the semester. We do, however, recommend you see your physician when you return to the US to test for any possible lingering infection contracted overseas.

Take good care of yourself!