

# HEALTH

# GUIDELINES



# & REQUIREMENTS

**Chile: Cultural Identity, Social Justice, and  
Community Development**

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## 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.
- Take an adequate quantity of all your necessary and prescription medications to last your entire stay.
- Ensure you are up to date on all routine vaccines. A covid vaccine is required.
- Discuss your specific travel itinerary (including various in-country locations you plan to visit) with your health care provider and discuss:
  - Recommended vaccines including but not limited to typhoid, Tdap booster, hepatitis A & B, and influenza.
  - Prevention and treatment of traveler's diarrhea.

### While you are in Chile:

- Take measures to prevent traveler's diarrhea.
- Take preventive measures to avoid mosquito bites.
- Do not travel alone and maintain an awareness of your surroundings at all times.
- Remember motor vehicle accidents remain the biggest risk for international travelers. Ride in the back seat, wear seatbelts, and do not be afraid to ask your driver to slow down.
- Use condoms if you are sexually active.
- While traveling abroad, minimize high-risk behaviors.
- Notify your Academic Director if you become ill.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

To protect your health in Chile, 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 US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. They are designed to inform you of health concerns that may be present in Chile 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 US health care providers' approaches, at times conflict with these guidelines. It is essential that you review these health guidelines and requirements with your health care provider, to discuss individual issues such as pre-existing medical problems and allergies to specific drugs. 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.



***SIT Study Abroad programs may venture off the usual tourist track. Pay careful attention to health and safety guidelines.***



## PREVENTION OF FOOD- AND WATER-BORNE ILLNESSES

*Tap water is generally safe to drink and cook with in Santiago, Valparaiso, and other major cities and it is usually safe as well to eat fresh fruits, vegetables, and salads. 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 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 follow certain do's 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) from a trusted source (ensure caps are sealed).
- Hot coffee, tea.
- Water that has reached a rolling boil for at least one minute at sea level (longer at higher altitudes).

### DON'T DRINK

- Tap water: this includes not using it to brush your teeth or using ice made from tap water.

### DO USE

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

### DO EAT

- Cooked vegetables, fruits with thick covering (citrus, bananas, and melons).
- Meat or fish that is thoroughly cooked (pork and lamb should be very well done).
- Pasteurized dairy products.

### DON'T EAT

- Unwashed or unpeeled raw fruits and vegetables.

- Fruits that do not have a thick, disposable outside covering.
- Rare or raw meat, 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 (unpasteurized) milk or milk products. Tuberculosis and brucellosis, both serious diseases are transmitted in this way, so the consumption of unpasteurized milk and milk products should be strictly avoided.

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 Academic Director(s).

### Diarrhea-Producing Infections

In Chile, there is a mild to moderate incidence of diarrhea among travelers. Most common is "traveler's diarrhea", 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). 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 ILLNESSES**

### **Altitude**

Students will be participating on a northern excursion to Putre which is well above sea level—the highest point is 13,780 feet. Even healthy, athletic individuals may become ill at altitudes over 10,000 ft. Common symptoms are unbearable headache and severe shortness of breath out of proportion to the mild fatigue most people experience while becoming acclimatized. Ascending gradually and resting during the first 12-24 hours can minimize the risk of altitude sickness. You may also wish to consult your health care provider about obtaining some acetazolamide (Diamox). Note that this is contra-indicated for those allergic to sulfa drugs and that this possibility should be discussed with your health care provider. Also note that alcohol and sedatives may have greater effect at high altitudes. Any symptoms of severe altitude illness should result in *immediate* descent. Individuals with chronic heart and lung disorders, such as asthma, and any other preexisting medical condition including sickle cell or diabetes should consult a health care provider before traveling to high altitudes. If your health care provider has given approval for high altitude travel, do let us know about the condition so that we can advise the Academic Director(s) and our local health care providers accordingly. Bring full

medical notes with you to help local health care providers in case of need.

### **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, sexual contact (as with HIV), or skin-to-skin contact of mutual open cuts and sores, appropriate precautions to avoid these types of exposure are necessary. This includes avoiding getting tattoos, or ear/body piercings and avoiding cuddling children with sores or draining insect bites. A series of three immunizing injections is recommended. This series should be initiated as early as possible so that at least two doses are taken prior to departure which will provide partial protection. The third shot should be taken five months after the second dose and may be given after returning home to achieve full, long-lasting immunity. An accelerated schedule can also be used as an alternative.

### **Air Quality**

Students with a history of asthma or allergies should be warned that air pollution, particularly in urban settings like Santiago and Arica, is steadily worsening, resulting in an increasing incidence of respiratory illness. Asthmatics should carry emergency medicines for severe asthma attacks.

### **HIV/AIDS and Blood Supplies**

HIV/AIDS is a concern worldwide. The HIV virus is transmitted by way of bodily fluids from an infected person. HIV is spread mainly by having anal or vaginal sex or sharing drug injection equipment with a person who has HIV. AIDS is an acquired immune deficiency that can result in life-threatening infections and is the most advanced stage of the HIV infection. It is the student's responsibility to protect him /herself from acquiring the disease through sexual transmission. 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 available at the time.

### Coronavirus COVID-19

COVID-19 is a respiratory virus that is spread through direct contact with an infected person as well as through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Symptoms of COVID-19 may appear **2-14 days after exposure** and may include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. The illness can also cause muscle or body aches, sore throat, vomiting and diarrhea. Reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death. *There are multiple vaccines to protect against the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). CDC states that a person is considered fully vaccinated two weeks after receiving the last recommended dose of vaccine. The best way to protect yourself is to obtain the COVID-19 vaccine and to continue to follow COVID-19 precautions!*

- **Clean your hands often**-wash your hands carefully and frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- **Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow. Throw used tissues in the trash.
- **Clean AND disinfect** frequently touched surfaces daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.
- **Avoid close contact.** Put distance between yourself and other people if possible. Practice physical distancing by staying at least 6 feet apart.
- **Inform your Academic Director immediately** if you have a pulmonary disease or any respiratory illness; have a fever or feeling sick; if you have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19; and/or have recently traveled from an area with widespread or ongoing community spread of COVID-19.

- **Contact ISOS and a health care provider** if you develop symptoms.
- **Avoid travel if you are sick or have a fever.** Your Academic Director will make appropriate accommodations for students who are ill.
- **Wear a facemask**, especially when you are around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle) and before you enter a healthcare provider's office.
- **Most importantly, stay connected:** especially during your Independent Study Project or Internship. Communicate daily with your SIT Academic Director. SIT continues to update its contingency and evacuation plans to ensure that we are prepared to take appropriate action in the event of a change in circumstances.

SIT recommends that students check the country's consular website for up-to-date information on entry and exit requirements.



### IMMUNIZATIONS FOR CHILE

Immunizations are recommended to protect your health and well-being by building up your immune defenses against specific prevalent diseases. Plan ahead at least 8 weeks since some immunizations require more than one dose for effectiveness. *SIT recommends that you bring a copy of your immunization record with you and insert this document in your passport so that it is easily accessible.*



## REQUIRED (for participation in program):

- **COVID 19:** Immunity is provided against COVID 19 disease two weeks after being fully vaccinated.

## RECOMMENDED (as a health precaution-consult your health care provider):

- **MMR (measles, mumps, rubella):** Two (2) doses of live measles vaccine are recommended.
- **Tetanus, diphtheria, 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 another booster.
- **Typhoid:** This vaccine is strongly encouraged as a viable protective measure. The vaccine is given either orally or by injection. Discuss the relative merits of each with your doctor.
- **Hepatitis A:** Hepatitis A vaccine, which provides long-term immunity, is recommended.
- **Hepatitis B:** A series of 3 immunization injections is recommended. 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.

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

**Take good care of yourself!**

