

HEALTH INFORMATION FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA

Please be aware that this program is physically and emotionally demanding. For example: climatic changes; high temperature, and/or high humidity; change in altitude; exposure to unfamiliar bacteria due to change in diet; long days and intense schedules; and extended travel in cramped vehicles.

These factors, combined with potential strains from culture shock, living away from regular support groups of friends and families, and intensive interaction with other group members can affect your health in ways you do not anticipate, putting stress on the body and emotions which make you more susceptible to illness. We ask that you assess your physical and emotional health carefully.

We encourage you to be open with yourself and with us regarding your health and medical history. Giving prior consideration to how your travels might affect you can be very important in maintaining your health during the semester. Pre-existing or past conditions will not exclude you from participating in the program; rather, in discussing them now you are more likely to have a healthier and more rewarding study abroad experience.

If you have a condition in your medical history that may call for treatment while you are abroad, or something a physician should know if you are being treated/prescribed drugs for any other condition that may arise, it would be very helpful if you could have this written up by your personal physician and bring it with you in a sealed envelope. This way if you do need treatment in Namibia or South Africa, you can give this to the doctor there. This will expedite the best treatment possible

If you are allergic to sulfa drugs, it is essential that you obtain and wear a Medic Alert bracelet or necklace. Go to <http://www.medicalert.org>.

See a Doctor before You Go

For recommended vaccinations and other health precautions you should take before departing for your destination, please check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>. Since we are not medical professionals, we cannot make recommendations that will be applicable to all individuals in all places, so you should make those decisions with a doctor. If you have ongoing health issues, it would be wise to check with your regular doctor about vaccines and other precautions.

It's important to schedule your appointment right away, if you haven't already. If you don't already have a regular family physician, google a list of travel clinics in your area.

Some helpful online resources:

- US Department of State web pages on services for American citizens abroad: www.travel.state.gov
- Centers for Disease Control: www.cdc.gov/travel
- World Health Organization: www.who.org
- International Society of Travel Medicine: www.istm.org
- Travel Health Online: www.tripprep.com
- HTH Worldwide: an insurance company that specializes in insurance for international travelers, offers advice on the issues you might encounter abroad in a series of short [Youtube videos](#).

There is other useful information available in the Resources Section of Global Gateway account. These resources are:

- Emotional Health & Study Abroad
- Wellness Plan for Study Abroad
- International Travel & Health Insurance
- Alcohol Abroad Awareness
- Helpful Videos for International Travel

Insurance

As a Center for Global Education student, you will be covered by Augsburg College's Foreign Travel Abroad insurance, underwritten by **Educational and Institutional Insurance Administrators**. This plan includes travel, accident and sickness coverage while you are outside of the U.S. Please note that it does not cover routine medical care, prescription drugs, or any expenses in the U.S. See also **Benefits Summary** and **Member Card**. We highly recommend that you create a profile at this website before departing for your program so you can familiarize yourself with the site and all its resources, and even use it to prepare for departure.

If you do incur medical expenses, you *may* need to pay for the services up-front, and be reimbursed by the insurance company. If so, make sure to save all receipts related to the injury/illness so you make request reimbursement. However, **in most cases the provider/facility will be able to work directly with the insurance company.**

Inoculations

The CDC recommend the following inoculations for travelers to Southern Africa. Although CGEE does not require any of these, we **strongly recommend** Hepatitis A and Meningitis.

- Hepatitis A or immune globulin (IG): CDC recommends this vaccine because you can get hepatitis A through contaminated food or water in Southern Africa, regardless of where you are eating or staying (see detail below).
- Hepatitis B if you might be exposed to blood (for example, health-care workers), have sexual contact with the local population, stay longer than 6 months, or be exposed through medical treatment.
- Malaria: You may need to take prescription medicine before, during, and after your trip to prevent malaria, depending on your travel plans, such as where you are going, when you are traveling (see detail below).
- Rabies, if you might be exposed to wild or domestic animals through your work or recreation.

- Typhoid: you can get typhoid through contaminated food or water. CDC recommends this vaccine for most travelers, especially if you are staying with friends or relatives, visiting smaller cities or rural areas, or if you are an adventurous eater.
- As needed, booster doses for tetanus-diphtheria, measles

Hepatitis

The Centers for Disease Control recommend that travelers to Central America receive an immune globulin (IG) shot or Hepatitis A vaccine for protection against Hepatitis A. According to the CDC, travelers to Central America are at high risk for Hepatitis A, especially if travel plans include visiting rural areas and extensive travel in the countryside, frequent close contact with local persons, or eating in settings of poor sanitation.

A study has shown that many cases of travel-related Hepatitis A occur in travelers to developing countries with “standard” itineraries, accommodations, and food consumption behaviors. Hepatitis A vaccine is preferred for persons who plan to travel repeatedly or reside for long periods of time in intermediate or high-risk areas. Immune globulin is recommended for persons of all ages who desire only short-term protection. The vaccine requires a series of injections, the first of which must take place at least four weeks prior to travel, and the second six months after the first. The immune globulin is a single dose shot. Because it offers only short-term protection (3-5 months), it should be administered shortly prior to travel.

Malaria

There are areas in Namibia, particularly in the north, but also less frequently in Windhoek, where malaria is a concern. You will find confusing, even conflicting information about the risk and prevention of malaria. We suggest you first consult your doctor for his/her recommendation and try to make sure you are able to take the medication you choose.

We encourage you contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Malaria Hotline at 770-488-7788 for the most current information. We ask that you pay close attention to the following information on Namibia, where health professionals do have substantial experience and expertise.

There is no medication that is proven to be 100% effective as a preventative measure; basically, you can take the medication of choice, hope it works if bitten by mosquitoes, and do your best not to be bitten.

We recommend the following while here in Southern Africa:

- Take anti-mosquito precautions:
 - The CDC recommends an insect repellent with [DEET \(N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide\)](#) as the repellent of choice. Many DEET products give long-lasting protection against the mosquitoes that transmit malaria.
 - Wear clothing which covers the body, particularly after dark when mosquitoes are the most active, along with effective mosquito repellent, etc.
 - You may want to bring mosquito netting (or purchase it once you arrive) to cover yourself when sleeping in areas where the risk is highest if you plan on traveling before or after the program. CGEE will provide mosquito netting for participants in malaria risk areas.
- Anti-malarial drugs: As an anti-malaria prophylactic the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommend the following:
 - Atovaquone/proguanil (brand name Malarone)
 - Doxycycline (many brand names and generics are available)

- Mefloquine (brand name Lariam and generic). Lariam has more side effects and should **not** be taken by anyone who is also taking anti-depressants or has a history of mental illness, as it tends to exacerbate the symptoms of mental illness and counteract the effectiveness of anti-depressants.
- All are expensive, but effective. Doxycycline and Lariam must be taken for one month after leaving the malarial area; Malarone only needs to be taken for one week after leaving the malarial area.
- *Note: Chloroquine is **NOT** an effective antimalarial drug in Southern Africa and should not be taken to prevent malaria in this region.
- Students should disclose all health problems, including mental health issues, to their travel doctors so they will not be prescribed a malaria prophylaxis which is contraindicated for them.
- The World Health Organization recommends Chloroquine plus proguanil (Malarone). Discuss the options with a health professional and decide which malaria protection makes most sense for you.
- Generally, you should begin taking the anti-malaria prophylactic two days – two weeks, depending upon the drug, before entering an area at risk for malaria. The city of Windhoek is considered a very low-risk area according to the Ministry of Health and Social Services. Whichever of the main anti-malaria prophylactics you choose, they can be fairly expensive.
- Students should disclose all health problems, including mental health issues, to their travel doctors so they will not be prescribed a malaria prophylaxis that is contraindicated for them.

Whichever of the main anti-malaria prophylactics you choose, they can be fairly expensive. If the cost of this medication is not covered by your health insurance, you may want to consider buying them in Namibia where the price is lower.

Be prepared to seek medical attention should symptoms develop. CGEE staff in Namibia are experienced, and will let students know how to identify the symptoms. Malaria is commonly treated with a medication called Fanzidar, which is a sulfa drug (a classification of antibiotic).

Rabies

The likelihood of being exposed to rabies is small. Namibians do keep dogs, which could have rabies. Like in the U.S., you can avoid this risk by staying away from them, but you can't rule out the possibility.

Meningitis

Namibia had a severe outbreak of meningitis in June 2010, which it managed to handle quite well by doing a massive local vaccination campaign. For some reason the risk of Meningitis in Namibia has escaped the notice of many health professionals, the CDC, and travel doctors. Your doctor may not recommend a meningitis vaccination, but if you choose to protect yourself in this way please insist upon one.

Check with your doctor about the timing for all of the inoculations and their side-effects (e.g., typhoid and Hepatitis B inoculations require a series of shots or pills over several weeks or months; Hepatitis A inoculation requires a second inoculation 6-12 months after the first injection). You may find it helpful to call the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) (888/232-3228 or 404/639-2572) and listen to their extensive recorded information about health risks and precautions for international travelers, or visit the CDC web page at <http://www.cdc.gov>.

If traveling out of Namibia before or after the scheduled program, you should check to be sure you receive the appropriate vaccinations.

Yellow Fever

There is no risk of Yellow Fever in Namibia and South Africa (there have been no reported cases there) there was recently been an outbreak of Yellow Fever in Angola, just to the north of Namibia. The government of Namibia *requires* proof of yellow fever vaccination **only** if you are arriving from a country with risk of yellow fever. This does **not** include the US. If you are traveling from a country other than the US, check this list to see if you may be required to get the yellow fever vaccine: [Countries with risk of yellow fever virus \(YFV\) transmission](#). Please be aware of this if you choose to visit on Fall/Spring Break or at other times of personal travel. As with any other vaccination, consult with your physician or travel clinic.

HIV/AIDS

One great threat that you cannot immunize yourself against is HIV/AIDS. The southern African region has the world's highest rate of HIV-AIDS infection. In Namibia, the rate is currently about 17% of the population. Students should be aware that any sexual activity is thus very risky and is discouraged by CGE. If you choose to be sexually active, using protection is imperative, but not entirely effective.

In the event of possible exposure to HIV through sexual assault, Namibia does provide access to Post-exposure Prophylaxis (PEP). The patient takes a course of Anti-Retroviral drugs which reduces the likelihood of him/her becoming infected with the virus. If you believe you may have been exposed to HIV, alert the CGE staff as soon as possible. However, PEP is not meant to be used in place of taking care to prevent exposure in the first place. It only reduces the likelihood of infection but does not eliminate it.

In the unlikely event that it is required, the World Health Organization rates the blood supply as secure. There have been no reported cases of HIV infection through infected blood in Namibia. Needles are also safe in Namibia and Southern Africa. All hospitals and clinics have individually-packaged, sterile, disposable needles, so you do not need to worry about bringing your own.

Radiological Report

A radiological report of the chest for signs of tuberculosis is required from every foreign national entering Namibia. You will need to have a chest x-ray signed off on by a radiologist, and be verified to be free of tuberculosis in order to be granted a visa. A form from the Namibian government will be provided by the Center for Global Education. **Please note: a skin test is not adequate. A chest x-ray must be performed.**

Accommodations

Students with formally diagnosed learning or physical differences have legal rights to program modifications. If you qualify, **please note this on the Health/Medical questionnaire in your Global Gateway**, and you will be contacted by CGEE/Augsburg staff to manage the accommodations necessary for you to have a successful semester.

General Health Care

There are several doctors in Windhoek that the CGEE – Namibia staff uses for semester students. These doctors are familiar with CGEE – Namibia students from past programs and therefore are comfortable and prepared to address general health care needs that may arise during the semester. Students are accompanied to the Doctor by a staff member.

During the semester, students should follow certain guidelines for general health care maintenance. General cleanliness of yourself, as well as of your living conditions will decrease the opportunity for the spread of bacteria. Because you may be living with up to 20 housemates, it is that much more important the house members make concerted efforts to keep their personal as well as the common spaces clean (kitchen, living room, dining room, Resource Room, vans). In order to facilitate this process, house members are divided into groups and assigned household tasks to insure the cleanliness of those areas mentioned above.

Students should also follow guidelines in regards to eating and drinking. In Namibia and South Africa, all piped water is potable, available in all urban and rural towns, and does not entail health risks, as in some other countries. Your health risk in regards to water is related to *adequate* consumption, not water quality. You will likely find yourself becoming thirsty more often in this hot and dry climate, so you will need to have a water bottle to carry with you daily. Beverages such as soft drinks, fruit juices and beer are readily available, though relying on such as your primary source is not sufficient to protect you from dehydration, and in fact can exacerbate dehydration.

When potable water is scarce, students will be provided with containers of safe water. You will likely find yourself becoming thirsty more often in this hot and dry climate, so you will need to have a water bottle to carry with you daily. Beverages such as soft drinks, fruit juices and beer are readily available, though relying on such as your primary source is not sufficient to protect you from dehydration, and in fact can exacerbate dehydration.

While strenuous walking is not a regular part of the program, there could be an occasion when this is necessary to reach a certain location. Varying road conditions may at times make anticipating this impossible, although our staff will keep you informed whenever possible. If your particular health condition makes this a concern, please be prepared to communicate your limitations to your program coordinators.

If you are accustomed to regular rigorous activity (e.g. jogging), you may find it difficult to maintain an equally active lifestyle during the semester. Discuss possible options for exercise when you arrive. Students may want to join a local health club.