

Holiday health myths EXPLODED!

One in two people become ill on holiday, but knowing the facts can help you dodge the health hazards

Myth: Taking an aspirin before you fly will prevent DVT

'While aspirin can reduce clots in arteries, there's conflicting evidence about whether it can prevent deep vein thrombosis (DVT),' says Dr Jane Wilson-

Howarth of travel health awareness campaign 8 Weeks To Go (www.8weekstogo.co.uk).

There's a greater risk of DVT when you're immobile for six hours or more as your blood flow slows down, and blood can stagnate in your legs and is more likely to clot.

Clots usually disperse, but if one should break away and travel to the lungs, it can be fatal.

SLASH YOUR RISK: 'Properly fitted flight socks stop the blood from pooling in the legs,' advises Dr Wilson-Howarth. Alternatively, walk up and down the plane every

hour and do exercises in your seat.

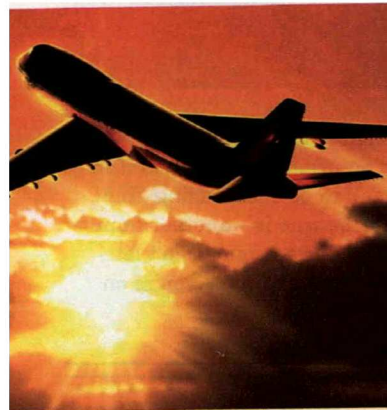
Consultant vascular surgeon John Scurr explains: 'You need to contract the calf muscles so blood is moved up the leg, for instance by pushing your feet up and down against resistance.' He recommends using the Airogym (£11.99, www.airogym.com), a pocket-sized, inflatable exercise cushion.

Consult your GP if you think you may be at risk.

Myth: Air con on planes spreads colds

Research in the *Journal Of The American Medical Association* found no difference in the rate of infection between plane passengers breathing only fresh air and those breathing recirculated air.

According to Dr Wilson-Howarth, you may be slightly more at risk to catch a cold on a plane 'because



cold viruses are airborne and you're in close confinement for hours with a few hundred people'.

SLASH YOUR RISK: You can catch colds from picking up germs on surfaces then touching your eyes or nose. Lower the risk of infection by keeping your hands clean.

Try Vicks First Defence Protective Hand Foam (£3.99 for 50ml, www.lloydspharmacy.com).

Vicks First Defence Micro-Gel Nasal Spray (£7.19 for 15ml, www.lloydspharmacy.com), can help prevent a cold developing.



Myth: I never get bitten so I don't need malaria tablets

'Not everyone reacts to mosquito bites so you could have been bitten without realising it,' warns Dr Wilson-Howarth.

Every year malaria affects 1800 UK travellers, with nine of those cases fatal. Visit www.malariahotspots.co.uk.

SLASH YOUR RISK: If you follow the prescription correctly, tablets are more than 90 per cent effective.

Medication usually needs to be started a week or more before you go and continued after you get home. Always finish the course as the disease can lie dormant for months.



Myth: Any sunglasses are better than none

'Poor quality sunglasses will let in UV light, causing damage and putting you at risk of cataracts and blindness in later life,' says Dr Wilson-Howarth.

SLASH YOUR RISK: Sunglasses should block out 99 to 100 per cent of UV rays and have either the European CE mark or British Standards Kitemark of approval.

'Beware of fakes sold in markets. Safety standards may also be lower in some countries outside the EU,' says Dr Wilson-Howarth.

Myth: You can get rabies only from dogs

Last year former glamour model Sam Fox (right) had rabies jabs after being bitten by a stray cat in Thailand.

'Any warm-blooded animal may carry rabies,' says Dr Wilson-Howarth.

SLASH YOUR RISK:

Be wary of animals, even if they seem friendly as rabies can cause mood changes.

If you're bitten, seek medical advice straight away. Visit www.who.int/rabies/rabies_maps.



Myth: I'm staying in a posh resort so I won't need jabs

Unfortunately, hotel stars don't protect you from hepatitis A and typhoid, both spread by contaminated food or water.

They can be picked up in parts of Turkey, Egypt, India and many other destinations.

SLASH YOUR RISK: 'Check what injections you need about eight weeks before you travel.

'Consult your GP, pharmacist or a private clinic that offers travel vaccinations,' says Melinda Setanoians of Lloydspharmacy (www.online.doctor.lloydspharmacy.com).



Words: Madeleine Bailey. Photos: Alamy, Corbis, Goff Photos



