



# Prescription Medication

Annenberg International Programs

Pre-Departure Information

# Do You Currently Take Prescription Medication?

If no...

Please archive this document and refer back to it if needed in the future.

If yes...

Please continue and make sure to read each section carefully.

# What Steps Do I Need to Take Before I Leave?

Discuss the following with your doctor:

- How long am I going to be out of the country?
- Where am I going?
- Can I bring my prescription medication into my host country? (In other words, is it considered a banned substance in my host country?)
- How much medication can I take with me? (In other words, how much can be prescribed and filled in one visit before I leave?)

# How Do I Pack My Medication?

- You must travel with your medication in its original container (the bottle/packet with the label that identifies the medication, dosage, and your name)
  - Do not combine/store medication in one travel container (e.g., travel pill case) in the event that customs agents ask you to identify the medication
- You must pack it in your carry-on bag; never pack it in your checked-in luggage.
  - You risk losing your medication if your luggage goes missing!
- This is the one circumstance where keeping an essential item in its original, bulky packaging/container is absolutely critical.
- It is strongly recommended that you bring a script (filled by your doctor) with your medication/dosage information in case customs agents want to see more proof that the medication is legally prescribed and medically necessary.

# Carry on Luggage Tips

- Keep prescription medication and valuables (electronics, chargers, jewelry, etc.) easily accessible within carry-on luggage.
  - You may be asked to check your carry-on at the last minute, in which case you would need to take them out quickly. DO NOT leave them in a checked bag!
- A former Annenberg student learned this the hard way: she gate checked her carry-on bag with her medication in it and was without both for three days.

# What Happens If I Run Out?

- You will need to find a local doctor who can prescribe your medication
- Your study abroad center or office at your host university will be able to refer you to a doctor
- You may also call International SOS to find a doctor
- Refer to your Annenberg orientation booklet and your USC overseas health insurance packet (the envelope with the bright sticker) for more details

# Brand Name vs Chemical Composition

Semester-long students:

You will most likely run out of medication while overseas and will need to see a local doctor for a prescription to fill in your host country. In order to find the equivalent of your medication in your host country, you will need to supply detailed information about your medication, in particular the chemical composition and dosage of your medication.

- Brand names of medication are not universal
- Medication will have different brand names in different countries
- Example of a brand name: Advil
- Advil's chemical composition: ibuprofen
- Dosage: 200 mg

*If you tell a doctor in your host country that you need Advil, s/he will not know what Advil is because it is an American brand name. Your local doctor will understand that you need ibuprofen.*

Note: Ibuprofen is not considered to be prescription medication. It is used here solely as an example of a particular drug whose chemical composition is widely known.

# What If My Medication Is Banned in My Host Country?

- Make sure to discuss this with your doctor
- Your doctor should be able to provide alternatives or a plan of action that you can share with a doctor in your host country
- Inform the study abroad center or study abroad office at your host university immediately so that they can give you doctor referrals as soon as you arrive
- Note: Ritalin is banned in the United Kingdom



# How Do I Pay for Prescription Medication Overseas?

- You must be prepared to pay 100% of your prescription costs up front; you can file a claim for reimbursement through ACE American
- Keep all receipts related to medical expenses
- Contact the USC Student Health Insurance Office if you have any questions: (213) 821-1551, [vhill@usc.edu](mailto:vhill@usc.edu).

# Remember Though...

- Do NOT have your prescription medication mailed to you in your host country! It will not clear customs!
- Some students feel that they no longer need their prescription medication because they are in a different environment and might be able to cope without medication.
  - DO NOT CHANGE DOSAGE/FREQUENCY WITHOUT CONSULTING WITH YOUR DOCTOR FIRST.

# Useful Contact Information

- USC Student Health Insurance Office
  - (+1) 213-740-0551
  - Valerie Hill: [vhill@usc.edu](mailto:vhill@usc.edu)
- ACE American (for prescription and routine medical expense claims)
  - (+1) 302-476-6194
- International SOS
  - USC membership number: 11BSGC000010
  - For the nearest SOS center, anywhere in the world: <http://www.internationalsos.com/en/emergencies.htm>
  - International SOS app available for iPhone, Android, Blackberry phones