



Travelling with Teams

With Dr Brian Sando, 4-time Chief Medical Officer, Australian Olympic Team



The frequency of sportspeople travelling between cities and countries has increased. Sports Trainers may well have to tend to athletes in foreign surroundings. As with all things in sport, good preparation provides the most successful outcome.

In preparation, learn as much as possible about:

- Sportspeople and officials who will be travelling
- Region being visited
- Travel arrangements
- Accommodation
- Equipment to be taken

The travelling Group

Apart from the knowledge of present and past injuries, any protective equipment and strapping used (and that such equipment is in good condition), history of past and current medical complaints, including allergies, is important. Critical is the need to ensure immunization status is up to date, particularly for tetanus, poliomyelitis and, depending on the region being visited, hepatitis A and other vaccinations.

When a person undergoing treatment of a current or recurring medical condition, be it asthma, an allergy, joint inflammation or other, be sure they take with them adequate medication or preparations to last them for the period they are away. It can be very difficult obtaining some medications while travelling, and what is distributed as one brand name in Australia, can be very different somewhere else.

A dental check 2-3 months before departure can avert distressing problems and costly consequences away from home.

It is essential to ensure that all medication taken will not infringe sports drug regulations. If in doubt, visit the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority (ASADA) website: <http://www.asada.gov.au/> or call the Anti-Doping Hotline on **1800 020 506**.



WSC Physio Kate Beerworth at the Women's World Cup with the Matildas



WSC's Dr Marc Cesana on tour with the Olyroos

The region being visited

The medical backup available in case of serious injury or illness should be established. Emergency transport, telephone numbers and appropriate hospitals and medical personnel are noted. It is virtually essential to have health travel insurance when travelling overseas.

Climatic conditions of temperature and humidity give forewarning as to clothing, fluid replacement, headwear and sunscreen requirements. It is safest to use reputable bottled water when travelling, ensuring it comes from sealed containers. It is not uncommon to hear stories of empty bottles being refilled with tap water and sold off as the real thing! Such precautions minimise the risk of gastro-intestinal problems which can occur with tap water in a foreign country.

Air pollution has the potential to produce hay fever and even asthmatic symptoms, as was experienced by some Australian athletes in Los Angeles, who had never previously experienced such symptoms. Antihistamines, for allergies, bronchodilators to relieve unexpected asthma symptoms, and nasal decongestants are useful items for a medical kit.

Endemic diseases ranging from malaria to encephalitis can require preventative vaccinations and medication before departure, while the eating of raw produce or uncooked items in some countries is best avoided.

Altitude can also present difficulties requiring planning attention some months prior to departure.

Travel arrangements

Travel fatigue increases with time spent in transit and the number of time zones crossed. To minimise dehydration associated with air travel a high fluid intake is recommended, but dehydrating drinks containing caffeine or alcohol (tea, coffee, colas, energy drinks like Red Bull) should be avoided. It is best to commence travel rested, and not to sleep until nightfall following arrival in the new destination. If stopovers are part of travel arrangements, you will need to know potential health problems in those countries as well.

Accommodation

The distance of accommodation from training and competition venues, whether it is in a noisy location, non air conditioned, etc can be helpful if addressed before departure. Carrying ear plugs, organising electric fans and understanding the meal menus provided so contingencies can be arranged (eg taking familiar breakfast cereals) will all assist comfort.



Australian Swim Team arrives in Beijing



Always drink sealed bottled water



Pollution could cause a problem for athletes



Check your accommodation beforehand

Equipment required

A medical kit, particularly if there is no accompanying doctor, could include:

Simple analgesics (paracetamol, aspirin); over the counter anti-inflammatories; antacids; antidiarrhoeals; laxatives; throat lozenges; cough lozenges; nasal decongestants; anti-inflammatory gels; antihistamines (anti-allergy); asthma relievers; insect repellent and sting relievers; sunscreen; tinea creams.

The trainer's bag will contain the range usually required with additional supplies in the luggage depending on the length of the trip. Antiseptics; strapping tape; dressings; bandages; scissors; slings; splints; forceps; torches etc.

It is prudent to have some of these things in cabin baggage, as it wouldn't be the first time that 'checked' baggage has gone astray!

Whether travelling across the city or around the world, the concepts remain the same, but greater travel contingencies are required for longer, more distant travel.

Wakefield Sports Clinic practitioners have accompanied teams to every corner of the globe, so, if you're travelling with a team and need a traveller's guide, please feel free to drop us an email. Good planning could make all the difference.



You'll need extra baggage to be fully prepared



Baggage has been known to go missing, take some supplies as carry-ons

The logo for Wakefield Sports Clinic features a dark blue background. At the top, the word "WAKEFIELD" is written in large, bold, yellow capital letters. Below it, a red ribbon flows across the width of the logo, with several white silhouettes of athletes in various sports poses (running, jumping, etc.) integrated into the ribbon's path. Underneath the ribbon, the words "SPORTS CLINIC" are written in white, spaced-out capital letters. At the bottom of the logo, the words "EDUCATION PROGRAM" are written in very large, bold, yellow capital letters.