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Rio Olympic Games visitors urged to take 'sensible precautions' against Zika virus

Allianz Global Assistance, a leading Canadian travel insurance and assistance provider and a company of Allianz Worldwide Partners, suggests precautions Olympic and Paralympic Games-goers can take to reduce risks and enjoy the festivities more safely.

More than 7 million tourists will head to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil to enjoy the XXXI Olympic and Paralympic Games, which take place from August 5th to 20th. Allianz Global Assistance suggests some practical measures Olympic Games-goers can take to reduce risks to their health and safety, and to help them enjoy the Rio Olympic and Paralympic Games to the fullest.

"Visitors from all over the world will go to Brazil to celebrate Olympic values and the achievements of the most incredible champions. Most will come back home with plenty of marvelous memories, but a few may have some unpleasant experiences. In order for the festivities to be unforgettable for everyone, there are a few precautions to be taken," reminds Dr. Laurent Verner, Group Chief Medical Officer at Allianz Worldwide Partners.

Zika and other mosquito-borne illnesses

Zika is spreading fast and, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the virus is particularly dangerous for pregnant women, as it can cause birth defects. Pregnant women should consult their family doctor before travelling to Zika-affected regions, including Brazil.

Other mosquito-transmitted illnesses present in Brazil are dengue fever and malaria. The most effective way of avoiding any of them is to protect against mosquito bites:

- apply repellents to both body and clothing;
- wear clothing that covers the arms and legs;
- stay indoors during peak mosquito hours, (early in the morning and at sunset);
- avoid areas with stagnant water.

Travel clinics can also prescribe medication to protect against malaria and dengue fever.

Infectious diseases

- Vaccination against yellow fever is strongly recommended. Protection from vaccination lasts for up to 10 years, but must be given at least 10 days before travelling (where it is the primary vaccine) and must be spaced apart from other types of vaccine or booster shots.
- Standard vaccinations (diphtheria, tetanus and polio) should also be up to date;
- Depending on the length of stay, vaccinations against typhoid and viral hepatitis A and B, are advisable. Family doctors should be consulted for up-to-date advice.

Medical care and assistance

Medical costs in Brazil are high. For example, medical treatment for a broken leg in Rio de Janeiro could cost between \$8,000 and \$9,000 CAD.

Be sure to purchase travel insurance from a trusted provider, review your policy in detail and understand your coverage before travelling.

Crime

Rio de Janeiro has a high crime rate. Visitors should avoid wearing visibly-branded clothing in the downtown area. On the beach, keep a watchful eye on your belongings and ask your companions to look after them if you decide to go for a swim. Watch out for gangs of children: a common ploy is for them to pretend to be in a scuffle, but then break apart and snatch valuables from onlookers.

Rio de Janeiro, the carnival capital of the world, is surrounded by lower-income neighbourhoods called “favelas.” If you decide to visit them, you should only do so with an official guide.

Sun exposure

Travellers from the northern hemisphere who are not used to the strength of the sun in Brazil may not realize until too late how harmful it can be. Over-exposure to the sun can cause fever and nausea, as well as long-term damage to the skin. To reduce the risk of damage:

- apply high-protection sun screen;
- wear a hat or cap;
- drink plenty of water;
- limit physical activities in the heat of the sun;
- use a fan;
- spend no more than a few minutes in the sun between 12 noon and 4pm.

Emergency numbers in Rio de Janeiro

- dial 192 to call an ambulance;
- call 193 for the emergency fire and rescue service;
- contact your assistance or insurance company as soon as possible after any incident for help and support.

More useful advice

For additional advice to help you stay safe while travelling to Rio de Janeiro, visit the [Canadian Government’s travel website](#).

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