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2018 FOOD TRENDS: WHAT'S IN
AND WHAT'S WORTH THE HYPE?

10 SIGNS IT MAY BE TIME
TO TALK TO SOMEONE

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WHILE ABROAD

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2018 FOOD TRENDS



WHAT'S IN AND WHAT'S WORTH THE HYPE?

By Jessica Tong, RD, Medisys Vancouver

March is National Nutrition Month in Canada and we're looking at which top foods are trending this year. Foods fall in and out of "fashion" like colours and cuts of jeans. Foods like kale, gogi and acai berries, hemp hearts, quinoa, sorghum, and teff have given way to newly popular, so called "superfoods" like moringa, sprouted and shelled watermelon seeds, raw nut oils, maqui berries, and tiger nuts. We've taken a look at a few of the top trending foods for 2018 and provided our take on what's worth the hype.

Top Trending Foods in 2018

SPIRULINA ALGAE

What is it? Spirulina is a type of blue-green algae that contains antioxidants and anti-inflammatory properties. What's all the hype about? Studies have shown that spirulina can lower triglycerides (fats floating in your blood) and LDL cholesterol, and may help raise HDL (the "good") cholesterol. Spirulina has also been rumoured to aid weight loss; however, Dietitians of Canada advise that insufficient evidence exists to support the efficacy of spirulina and other blue-green algae supplements for weight loss or weight maintenance.

What do we think? We're waiting until more evidence becomes available before recommending this product. While spirulina itself is not thought to produce microcystin toxins (hepatotoxins), other cyanobacteria grow in the same natural bodies of water as spirulina (warm lakes). Thus, there is the potential for cross-contamination. As such, many manufacturers now grow spirulina in controlled conditions.

While recent tests of spirulina supplements in Canada found no microcystins, Health Canada has stated that adults should exercise caution. Blue-green algae supplements should not be given to children. Pregnant and breastfeeding women should consult a health care professional before use.

CHAGA MUSHROOMS

What are they? Chaga mushrooms are charcoal-looking fungi that grow on hardwood trees in cold, northern forests. Some populations, such as indigenous Siberians, have been using chaga for thousands of years.

What's all the hype about? Based on limited data, some sources suggest that chaga may have anti-tumor benefits. Enthusiasts claim that chaga mushrooms can do everything from boosting immunity, to battling sun damage, to relieving pain to treating cancer.

What do we think? We do not recommend using chaga due to the lack of reliable data to support safety and efficacy. There is limited evidence to support the effectiveness of chaga as an anti-tumor agent due to a lack of clinical trials.

The safety of its use and information regarding potential side effects is also limited. There are studies that suggest that chaga may interact with medications used for treating high blood pressure and diabetes, so people on these types of medication should avoid chaga. Chaga is also high in oxalates (oxidants as opposed to antioxidants). Oxalates can be toxic to your organs in high doses, prevent absorption of nutrients like iron and calcium, and they can also cause the formation of kidney stones.

CHARCOAL

Black charcoal based foods: People use charcoal for everything, from face masks and toothpaste, to shampoo and everything in between. Some people also eat charcoal pills to "absorb" alcohol when they've consumed too much alcohol or to "manage a hangover" or they go on "charcoal cleanses".

What is it? Simply put, charcoal is burnt organic matter like wood or coconut shells. Charcoal becomes activated when it's exposed to gases at high temperatures, and this "activation" helps the charcoal bind with anything it comes in contact with. Charcoal has been heralded to have "detoxification" properties.

What's all the hype about? Charcoal is rumoured to offer numerous benefits from improving your skin to curing a hangover to whitening your teeth. Charcoal does have detoxification properties. Specifically, doctors use activated charcoal to treat acute poisoning and drug overdoses because of its ability to bind with these substances before your body absorbs it. Charcoal-based foods, however, contain a much lower dose of charcoal than what would be used by a doctor. What do we think? We don't recommend eating charcoal based foods. If you eat charcoal, it can bind to things you don't want in your body but it can also bind with the stuff you do want –like vitamins, minerals, and phytonutrients. Eating charcoal can also keep your body from fully absorbing medications you've taken close to eating charcoal-based foods.

Want to know which foods you should incorporate or not in your diet to make it healthier? Call us at **1 800 361-3493** or email us at bookings@medisys.ca to book a consultation with one of our registered dietitians.



10 Signs it May be Time to Talk to Someone

By Mary Polychronas, Psychologist, Medisys Montreal

Mental illness affects people of all ages, cultures, races, income levels, and educational backgrounds. About 1 in 3 Canadians will experience either a mental illness or a substance use issue in their lifetime.¹ According to the public health agency of Canada, 43% of Canadian adults and 57% of Canadian youth report difficulty coping with unexpected and difficult problems and day-to-day demands.²

Despite the fact that mental illness is so common in Canada, about half of those who have experienced either depression or anxiety have never discussed the issue with a doctor or health professional.³ In fear of being stigmatized, ostracized, or discriminated against, too many people stay silent and suffer alone. So much so that suicide claims about 12 Canadian lives every day.⁴ Shockingly, suicide is still one of the leading causes of death amongst both men and women from adolescence to middle age.⁵

The sooner one seeks help, the sooner they can commence a treatment plan and resume a happy, healthy life. Although seeking professional help may seem like an obvious decision, many people choose to wait until they are overwhelmed and significantly challenged by daily life before they reach out to a professional.

How do you know when it's time to seek professional help? Here are a few potential indicators of a problem, and some behaviors and feelings to watch out for:

1. CHRONIC, UNRELENTING STRESS

Stress may occur in one or more areas of life such as, work, home, school, and personal relationships. Occasional stress is normal and can be a motivating factor in your life. Excessive and persistent stress, however, is often a sign of a problem that can have a significant negative impact on your physical and emotional health. From a mental health perspective, chronic stress can lead to difficulties with concentration, memory, mood as well as the motivation to get things done. Increased stress often leads to absences from work, decreased professional performance, feelings of isolation, disturbed sleep patterns, unhealthy eating habits and negative thinking.

2. EVERYDAY TASKS AND DEMANDS SEEM OVERWHELMING

Feeling overwhelmed at times is normal with life's everyday demands or in association with a personal and important life event or even a busy period at work. Constantly feeling overwhelmed accompanied by feelings of sadness, crying, lethargy, or feelings of hopelessness are more serious. Without the proper support and guidance, these feelings typically become amplified. When the intensity, duration, and frequency of these feelings are exaggerated, this may be a sign that it's time to seek professional support.

3. PERSISTENT THOUGHTS

It may be fine and exciting to think of an upcoming event or rethink an important decision. However, when most of your minds' energy is consumed by negative thoughts or the same thoughts over and over again, this can become debilitating. Thoughts that begin with "What if...." or "I can't believe this happened ..." often persist over long periods of time and limit our ability to function throughout the day.

4. UNEXPLAINED PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

Emotional stress often has physical symptoms. For example stress can lead to headaches, stomach problems, back and neck pain, or aching muscles. If you are experiencing physical pain or symptoms that cannot be explained physiologically, you may consider these symptoms to be manifestations of emotional distress.

5. TURNING TO SUBSTANCES OR VICES TO "COPE"

There is a fine line between substance use, and substance abuse. An estimated 80% of Canadians drink alcohol to

some degree, and for most, alcohol consumption does not pose a mental or physical health concern. Using alcohol or other substances to cope, numb, or "deal with" feelings of stress, sadness, anxiety, or insecurity is a potential indicator that a problem may exist or one that may soon develop. While some turn to drugs or alcohol, others turn to food, gambling, shopping, or other vices to "cope". No matter the outlet, this behaviour is problematic and can be considered a warning sign.

6. WHEN NOTHING SEEMS TO HELP

When faced with continued negative thoughts or excessive stress, most people will do what they can to find calm and solve their problems. However, when all attempts to rectify a situation lead to continued unfavorable results and nothing seems to be helping, it may be time to seek help. Unfortunately, waiting for feelings of increased stress, sadness or anxiety to go away on their own can exacerbate the problem.

7. EXPRESSED CONCERN FROM FAMILY, FRIENDS, OR CO-WORKERS

Our mood and state of mind significantly impacts the relationship we have with our spouse, our family members, our friends and our colleagues. It may also affect our performance with daily tasks, school or work. Creating unrealistic goals, missing deadlines, difficulties making decisions and inability to balance work and personal life, often become apparent to those around us. When family, friends, and co-workers share and voice their worries, it's time to listen up.

8. LOSING INTEREST IN THINGS YOU USED TO ENJOY

We don't always sustain interest in everything we do. People are curious and we often explore and try new things. Losing interest in things that used to bring joy and accomplishment, such as taking on new projects at work or socializing with colleagues and friends, can be associated with undue stress. When personal grooming, a balanced diet, rest, exercise, and social activities are neglected, this may be a warning sign that help is needed.

9. RELATIONSHIP ISSUES

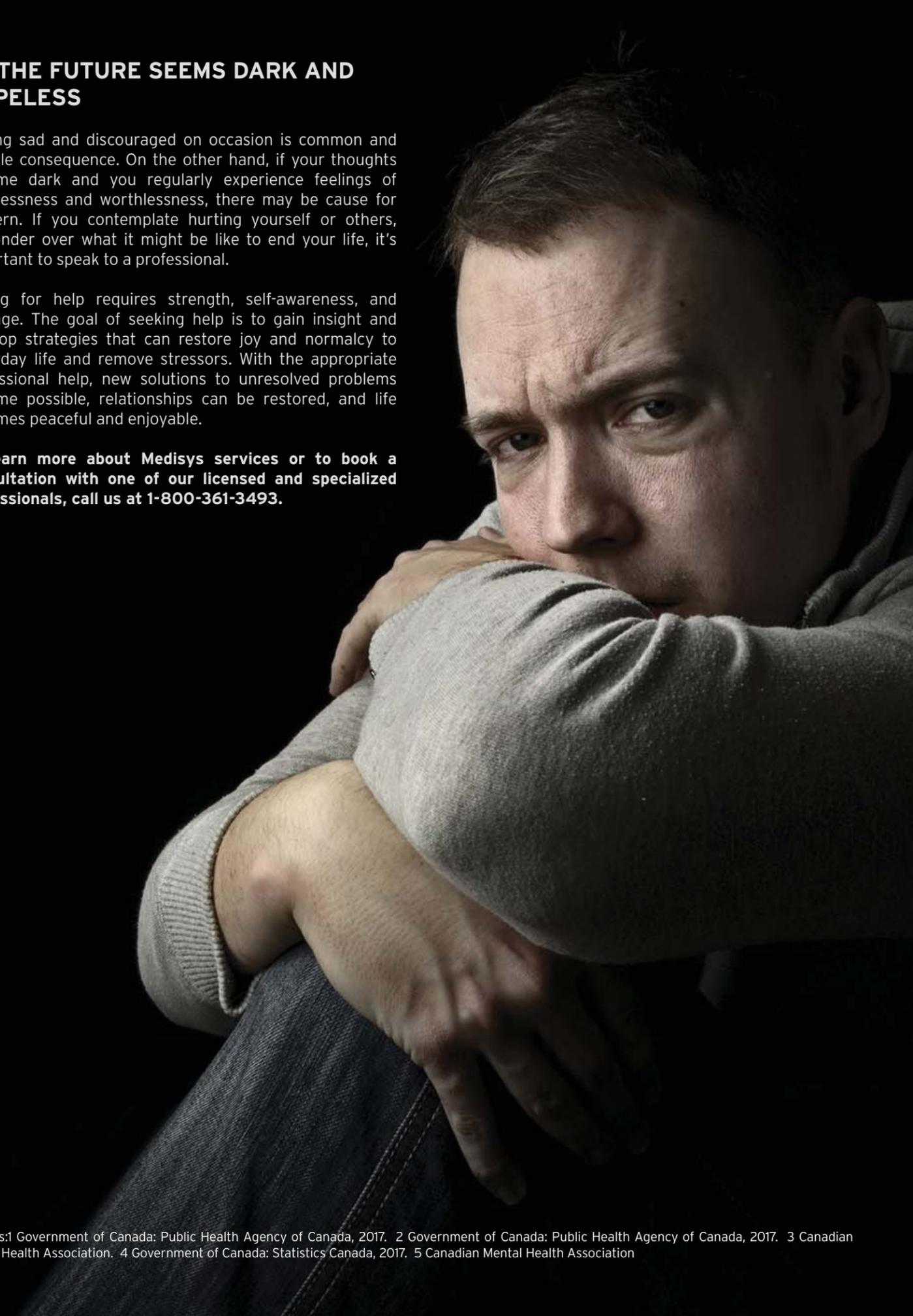
It is common to have relationship disputes from time to time whether in one's personal life or at work, however, this can also be one of the most common causes of emotional distress. Furthermore, someone experiencing a mental health issue may become irritable, snappy, or unpleasant, putting further strain on both personal and work related relationships. Be aware of how you feel and interact with those around you, if your relationships are becoming problematic, speak to someone.

10. THE FUTURE SEEMS DARK AND HOPELESS

Feeling sad and discouraged on occasion is common and of little consequence. On the other hand, if your thoughts become dark and you regularly experience feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness, there may be cause for concern. If you contemplate hurting yourself or others, or ponder over what it might be like to end your life, it's important to speak to a professional.

Asking for help requires strength, self-awareness, and courage. The goal of seeking help is to gain insight and develop strategies that can restore joy and normalcy to everyday life and remove stressors. With the appropriate professional help, new solutions to unresolved problems become possible, relationships can be restored, and life becomes peaceful and enjoyable.

To learn more about Medisys services or to book a consultation with one of our licensed and specialized professionals, call us at 1-800-361-3493.



TIPS TO STAY HEALTHY WHILE ABROAD

By Dr. Jay Keystone, Director of Travel Health, Medisys

1. BOIL IT, PEEL IT, COOK IT, OR FORGET IT!

When travelling to a developing country, food-and water-borne illnesses such as Hepatitis A, typhoid fever, as well as toxin-producing E.coli, campylobacter and shigella bacteria represent the biggest health risks. We recommend avoiding tap water and ice cubes at resorts, hotels and restaurants, as well as foods rinsed in tap water like salads and food from street vendors. Similarly, it's best to avoid unpasteurized dairy products while travelling abroad.

2. USE PROPER ANTI-MOSQUITO MEASURES

Mosquitos can transmit a number of conditions such as yellow fever, malaria, zika, chikungunya. (Alvin Baez/Reuters), or dengue. The best way to protect against mosquito-borne diseases is to avoid mosquito bites. Proper anti-mosquito measures can not only help prevent disease, but can also prevent secondary skin infections caused by scratching. We recommend insect repellents containing DEET (25-30%) or Picaridin (20%), which are effective for four to 12 hours (depending on the product) and are safe for pregnant women and children over two months of age. Remember, it's important to put on insect repellent AFTER you apply sunscreen if you want to avoid the double indignity of itchy bites on top of a sunburn.

3. SHOWER MORE OFTEN WHEN ABROAD AND USE MORE SOAP

Whether you are hiking up a rainforest mountain in Bali, giraffe gazing on safari in Kenya, paddling down a tropical stream in Costa Rica, basking in the sun on the pristine white-sand beach in Bora Bora, or exploring the flea markets of Goa India, you are at risk of coming into contact with cutaneous larva migrans and parasites. Parasites can be transmitted to human skin through the sand, by way of animal feces. When returning from the beach, a rainforest walk, a paddle, or a hike, it's a good idea to take a precautionary shower.

4. KNOW YOUR ROAD RISK AND ACT ACCORDINGLY

The number ONE cause of death among travellers is motor vehicle accidents. We recommend travellers stay off motorcycles and mopeds entirely, and avoiding travel on rural roads after dark. It really doesn't matter who your driver is. You can have an excellent driver, but it's the guy coming the other way who's going to knock you off the road. Also, vacationers tend to drink more than they otherwise would before getting behind the wheel. Alcohol and motor vehicles don't mix - ever. Ask hotel staff to provide a recommended driver vs. sourcing your own when abroad.

5. NO GLOVE, NO LOVE

Unsafe sex is always a risky endeavor, but particularly so while travelling to a developing country. Of the world's 36.7 million people living with HIV, 2 million reside in Latin America and the Caribbean, and half live in Eastern and Southern Africa. 1 in 2 travellers who have sex with a new partner while abroad report they did not expect to have sex, meaning they were not prepared. All travellers should bring condoms from home, even if they don't anticipate sex during their vacation. Condoms sold abroad may not meet North American quality standards. Aside from HIV/AIDS, there are a multitude of sexually transmitted diseases that should be on your radar.

6. BYO MEDICAL SUPPLIES

You don't need to bring a surgical kit with you to Montego Bay, but bring your own syringes when travelling to Africa, India, or Southeast Asia, as well a few well-chosen supplies. Depending on your destination, we recommend a short list of basics:

- Medications for diarrhea and constipation
- Bandages and a topical antibiotic
- Pain medication
- Something to treat a sunburn
- Mosquito netting (depending on destination)
- Syringes/needles (depending on destination)
- Water purifier
- An antihistamine for allergic reactions

7. KNOW YOUR OPTIONS FOR LOCAL DOCTORS

If you do get sick abroad, the local doctors and medical care might not necessarily be what you're used to. If you have a medical emergency, go to the nearest big city and look for a university teaching or high end private hospital. For peace of mind, you may want to consider a service like Medisys On-demand 24/7 ongoing care - this will ensure you can speak to a trusted Canadian healthcare professional, any time of the day or night, from anywhere in the world to gain immediate medical advice and guidance for you and your family while travelling abroad.

8. LOOK FOR RED FLAGS IN ONLINE REVIEWS

It's not hard to find online reviews of popular destinations, hotels, and resorts, and those reviews can sometimes offer insight into recurring health problems at a particular location. One or two bad reviews can be ignored but if there is a pattern of reviews complaining about the same issue, I take it seriously.

9. GET TRAVEL HEALTH INSURANCE, AND MAKE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND IT

We've all heard horror stories of someone getting sick abroad, having to spend some time in the hospital, and winding up with an unwieldy bill. Travel health insurance, including evacuation coverage, is generally a wise choice but make sure you read the fine print and understand what is covered. Elderly travellers may be ineligible for travel health insurance, as can people with a wide variety of pre-existing medical conditions.

10. GET VACCINATED

Vaccinations are up to 99% effective in preventing a variety of tropical and infectious diseases. Hepatitis A and B are the key vaccinations for travellers to the Caribbean. Hepatitis A is transmitted through contaminated food and water, while Hepatitis B can be transmitted through unsterilized injections or sexual contact.

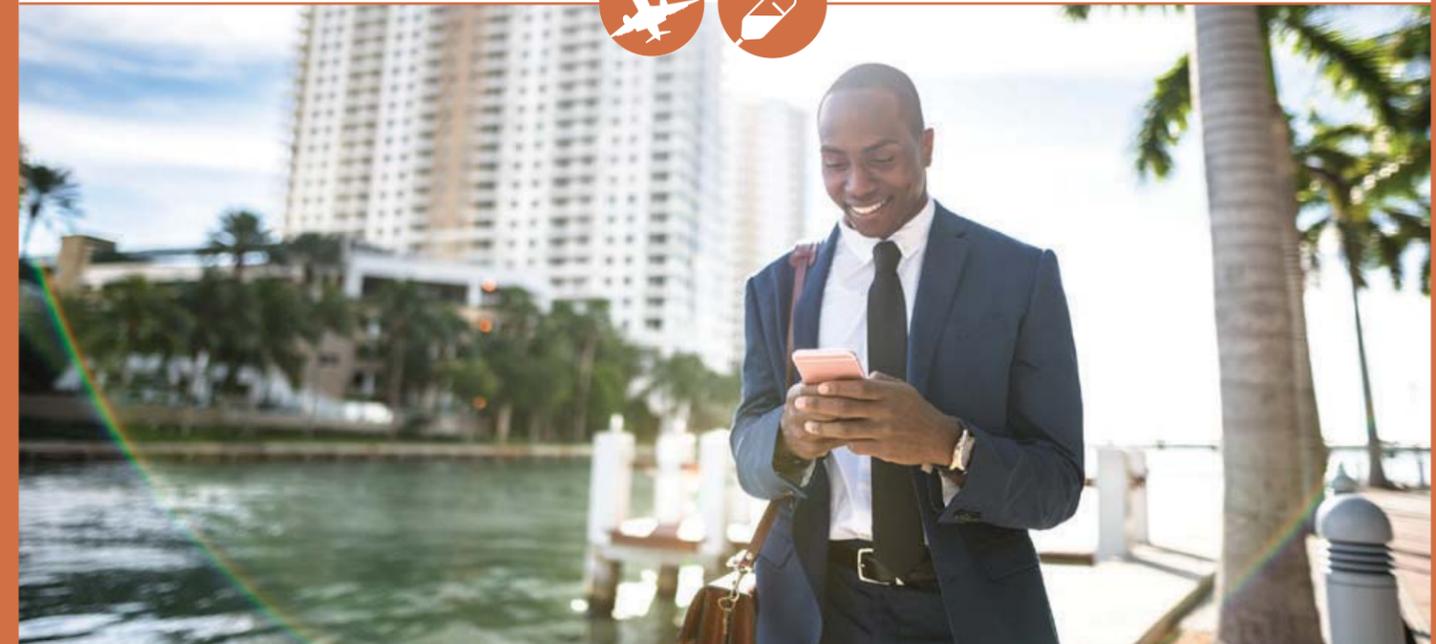
Travel health and recommended vaccinations vary significantly depending on the travellers health status, itinerary, destination, even down to the specific area(s) they are visiting. Before you travel, and especially if you have a health condition or are travelling somewhere exotic, it's always best to speak with a health professional that specializes in travel medicine prior to departure.

For more information or to inquire about booking a Medisys pre-travel health consultation, contact us at **1-800-361-3493**.

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TRAVELLING A LOT FOR WORK?



At Medisys Travel Health clinics we offer:

- Travel medical advice based on itineraries, personal risk, and underlying health issues
- Routine required and recommended vaccinations and prescriptions for malaria prevention and self treatment of traveler's diarrhea
- Personalized advice on injury and infection prevention
- Travel health product recommendations

“ **Travel
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For more information or to book an appointment, visit [medisys.ca](https://www.medisys.ca) or call us toll-free at **1 800 361-3493**

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MICRONUTRIENTS
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MORE THAN 80%
OF CANADIANS
HAVE AN INADEQUATE INTAKE OF CALCIUM
AND MAJOR PHYTONUTRIENTS.

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TO LEARN
MORE**

