

Your Health

 Health Partners

AUGUST 2022
NEWSLETTER

HOLIDAY & HEALTH PLANNING AHEAD

*Plus: an in-depth look
at neurodiversity*



This month's edition of *Your Health* explores holiday health, with safe travel advice, tips on jet lag, sun care and hydration and, most importantly, an emphasis on letting yourself relax and enjoy it! Travel is not always easy, and for those of us who are non-abled or neurodiverse, it can present some challenges. This *Your Health* therefore takes an in-depth look at what neurodiversity is and how the different conditions can manifest.

We all love a holiday. With summer here at long last, we are fortunate in our beautiful, green countryside and variety of beaches here in the UK. The question this year more than ever perhaps is: Staycation or brave the airports?

Whichever you choose, our best advice to ensure that you have a wonderful time 'away' is to do exactly that: take time 'off' and let yourself unwind. Depending on your work role or personal responsibilities, you may need to carry those with you wherever you go – but try to unburden yourself as much as possible, and switch off for a good amount of time to let your body and brain relax.

Although going away can present certain health challenges – such as sunburn or heat stroke, infection or travel-related illness – if you plan ahead, pack your sunscreen and hat, drink plenty of water and know where to go in an emergency, you are already a step ahead.



“Our best advice to ensure that you have a wonderful time ‘away’ is to do exactly that: take time ‘off’ and let yourself unwind”



IF YOU ARE PLANNING ON GOING AWAY

- Read up about the local area. Take a look at the FCO site to get advice about travelling abroad, including the latest information on COVID-19, safety and security, entry requirements and travel warnings: www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice.
- Get medical advice about immunisations and prophylactic/preventative medication, e.g. for malaria, well ahead of the trip; for COVID-19, make sure you have had your boosters as appropriate.
- Consider buying a traveller's medical kit, extra masks, gloves, hand sanitisers and disinfectant wipes.
- Discuss any outstanding concerns and the impact that travel may have on your pre-existing health conditions with your GP/practice nurse.
- Make sure that you have enough medication for your trip, including medication rescue packs for those that may need them.
- Take out travel insurance/get a UK Global Health Insurance Card (replaces EHIC). Find out more at www.gov.uk/global-health-insurance-card.
- Give yourself plenty of time to get to the airport – there may be queues due to COVID-19 or staffing issues.

- Find out what the COVID-19 requirements are for your flight, arrival at your location, departure and arrival back in the UK, and take the steps you need to in a timely manner. Check out the gov.uk site: www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

If you are on a flight that lasts more than five hours, to minimise the possible risk of deep vein thrombosis (DVT) you should:

- Minimise alcohol intake and keep well hydrated;
- Maintain mobility and exercise;
- Avoid tranquilising medication;
- Wear compression stockings for those medically advised to do so (note that poorly fitted ones can increase the risk of DVT).

Be aware that the risk of DVT increases with smoking, recent surgery (within 10 days), pregnancy, family history of DVT, oral contraceptive pill and hormone replacement therapy. There is no clear evidence of benefit in taking aspirin for the prevention of travel-related DVT.



UPON ARRIVAL

- Jet lag: this starts to have an effect if you have travelled across three time zones. The resulting fatigue can affect your concentration and decision making. Allow time to acclimatise upon arrival.
- Traveller's diarrhoea is the most common traveller's health problem. Avoid/mitigate by eating freshly cooked food, eating fruit that can be washed or peeled, drinking safe water or ice and consider self-treatment antibiotics that can be supplied by travel clinics for destinations that have a higher risk.
- Pay particular attention to alcohol, drug use and sexual behaviours while away from home.



- Take and wear sunscreen as appropriate.
- If you are in an area endemic for malaria, remember ABCD:
Awareness
Bite prevention
Chemoprophylaxis (malaria tablets)
Diagnosis and treatment.
- Pay attention to the COVID-19 requirements within the country – this may include wearing masks in certain places. Keep yourself safe.

Implementing some common sense can help to mitigate the risks. Always make sure you take key medical records with you (these days most mobile phones have a medical record that is accessible in emergencies) and, most of all, enjoy yourself! 

Sources: cks.nice.org.uk, www.cdc.gov, services.nhsbsa.nhs.uk, www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

For anyone going on holiday, there is always time needed to be spent on planning – whether that's plotting your route, booking your flight or figuring out where to sleep.

It can be the most tedious part of the trip or the most fun, but for neurodivergent people and families, planning for a holiday can mean additional considerations as well as different approaches depending on the condition.

Turn the page for an in-depth look at neurodiversity and neurodiverse conditions...

SO, WHAT IS NEURODIVERSITY?

Neurodiversity refers to the different ways in which the brain can work and interpret information. No two brains are quite alike! For over a million people in the UK, these differences mean that they are diagnosed with conditions such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia or another neurological condition.

NEURODIVERSITY AT WORK

Neurodiversity at work involves recognising that some employees may have different ways of interpreting information, interacting with others and problem solving. Such employees often possess a unique skillset, which can benefit employers seeking progressive approaches to managing their organisation. The key is to recognise diversity, encourage it and support it with focused adjustments.

Neurodiversity is the concept that all humans vary in terms of neurocognitive ability. People experience, view and interact with the world around them in different ways. Within neurodiversity, differences in thinking, behaving and learning are not deficiencies, but instead are differences in the way they think.

Neurodiversity covers a range of conditions such as ADHD, autism, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, dyslexia and Tourette syndrome. These conditions are more common than you may think – approximately 15% to 20% of the population is thought to be neurodivergent, i.e. one in seven people in the UK is neurodivergent.

While there have been some changes regarding neurodiversity in the workplace, there is still a lot of misunderstanding and lack of acceptance about neurodiversity.



WHY IS A NEUROINCLUSIVE ORGANISATION IMPORTANT?

- Research shows that neurodiverse employees enhance organisational effectiveness, improve creativity and enable individual thought.
- People perform better when they can be themselves at work, so it is vital that organisations create inclusive working environments to support all employees, including neurodivergent individuals.
- Neurodivergent individuals are more likely to disclose their conditions to their employer when they can see their employer recruiting a diverse workforce.
- Retention of staff is fundamental in the current workforce shortage. People have greater loyalty to companies that are inclusive.
- Upskilling and supporting managers to have an understanding and acceptance of neurodiversity has a positive effect on their line-management skills, including developing clear communication skills and dividing work based on strengths and competencies.
- Neurodivergent employees are naturally proficient in many skills critical to the future of work, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity and analytical skills (Optimize, 2022).
- Considering neurodiversity expands organisational outlook, which results in better customer experience, as employees can engage with customers from different perspectives.

WHAT DOES EMBRACING NEURODIVERSITY LOOK LIKE?

There are some everyday actions that will help neurodivergent employees within the workplace.

These may look like:

- Raising awareness and understanding of neurodiversity and the different forms of neurodivergence; sharing knowledge is the key and will create and empower a diverse team of people;
- Creating a culture where employees feel comfortable to disclose and talk openly about their neurodiversity – this includes recognising each person as an individual and establishing that what they need may be different;
- Fostering trusting relationships between managers and employees;
- Highlighting the employer’s commitment to diversity and inclusion;
- Proactive and reasonable adjustments being utilised, regardless of whether or not employees are identified as neurodiverse;
- Inclusive recruitment policies and procedures;
- Having accessible software for all;
- Communicating clearly, e.g. clear signage around the building, meetings followed up with a summary email;
- Having environments that are conducive to the employee’s needs, such as quiet break-out areas, dividers to reduce noise or inclusive pods.

The more aware we are of the differences between us, the better we can celebrate them and the more we can accept and understand them. We can take account of our differences.



“Dyspraxia has never held me back. Some of the smartest people I know are people with learning disabilities.”
Daniel Radcliffe

What services are available?

Our Workplace Adjustments Service has specialist members with expertise in workplace assessments and solutions related to neurodivergent conditions. Our combination of onsite and remote assessment provides organisations with the flexibility of having their workforce referrals seen by a specialist quickly, using a secure online platform from which to undertake a full assessment.

What does a Health Partners workplace assessment look like?

The assessment focuses on the clinical history of the person being referred and which is relevant to their work, their job responsibilities, challenges they experience at work and their strengths. The assessment includes strategies that

are currently working well, problem-solving ideas and adjustments that could be brought into the workplace.

Our workplace assessments and expert advice on adjustments, modifications, new technologies and accessories provide a reassurance that any neurodiversity-related issues can be faced immediately and determinedly using a choice of approaches.

Changes as a result of these assessments can result in increased commitment to the organisation on the part of the person being assessed. Trust and goodwill increase as the workforce feels listened to and appreciated for their strengths and their different ways of thinking. Instead of seeing everything as a struggle, people find themselves discussing what can work better for

them in their workplace and how they can hone some of their strengths with simple adaptations.

The assessors discuss the adjustment with both the referred member of staff as well as their manager, so that any questions are addressed, support mechanisms are shared and problems are solved.

Ultimately, and from the perspective of the organisation, this process will help to reduce absenteeism, increase productivity and boost profitability. From the perspective of the individuals, they feel listened to, valued as an employee and stronger in themselves. From the perspective of the job itself, there may be changes that whole teams can benefit from, new ways that streamline inefficient processes and re-designs that increase the health and wellbeing of all staff members. 

Sources: ACAS, Lexxic, NHS, CIPD, Uptimize, Armstrong

At Health Partners we offer a full range of tailored health and wellbeing services.

Our thinking is innovative. We constantly develop new responses and tools designed to address the health and wellbeing challenges that face your business and people.

Our commitment is total. We invest in our services, creating new ones and keeping in step with every client. We constantly explore new ways of working and make no compromises in the quality of our services.

Simply put, we are here to help people be their best.