

★ Advice for students who travel

Expert talks of vaccines, meds, food and water

BY DAVID OLSON
david.olson@newsday.com

As tens of thousands of U.S. college students prepare for trips abroad for classes, volunteering or a vacation, they should start planning weeks in advance to make sure they get the shots and medications they need to avoid common illnesses, an NYU Winthrop Hospital travel expert told students Tuesday.

Dr. Theresa Fiorito, director of the hospital's family travel clinic, told about a dozen students at the New York Institute of Technology in Old Westbury that when they are abroad in certain countries, simple steps such as not eating fruit that can't be peeled and not drinking beverages with ice — which can come from contaminated tap water — can prevent unwelcome traveling companions such as diarrhea. Between 30 and 70 percent of people traveling in developing countries get

diarrhea, she said.

Most of Fiorito's discussion Tuesday was focused on the illnesses you're likely to contract in a developing country. You don't have to worry about ice in your drink in France. But, she said, there are risks even in some developed countries.

For recommendations on vaccines and medications for the country you're traveling to, go to wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel.

The students at Tuesday's presentation are in NYIT's medical school, so they have more knowledge than most of the more than 325,000 U.S. college students who, according to the U.S. State Department, study abroad each year.

But Viraj Modi, 22, a first-year student who lives in Glen Cove, said he was surprised at the prevalence of hookworm. Fiorito displayed a photo of the infected foot of a friend of her brother, who contracted the parasite while walking barefoot on a beach in Puerto Rico.

"Walking on the beach and getting the worm is something I had in my mind, but I didn't think it was all that common," he said.

Up to 740 million people worldwide are infected with



Dr. Theresa Fiorito speaks Tuesday at New York Institute of Technology in Old Westbury.

hookworm, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Fiorito urged students to wear shoes if they walk on a beach.

Modi's parents are Indian immigrants, and when he traveled with them to India four years ago for a wedding, he stayed healthy because, he said, his family followed basic precautions for traveling there, such as not eating food sold on the street and drinking only water from a bottle that is sealed.

TRAVEL TIPS

- Before you go abroad, check this Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website, which has information on recommended vaccines and medications by country: wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel
- In most developing countries, don't eat raw vegetables or fruits unless you can peel them. In restaurants, stick to fully cooked food served hot.
- Avoid ice in most developing countries. Drink beverages only from sealed bottles.
- Pack a travel health kit with

prescriptions, first-aid supplies and other items.

- Bring insect repellent with DEET, especially in tropical countries. Mosquito bites can lead to a number of diseases, including malaria, which in 2016 sickened about 216 million people and killed 445,000 worldwide, according to the CDC. Anti-malaria medications are available.
- Contact a travel medicine specialist at least four to six weeks before departure.

SOURCE: DR. THERESA FIORITO, NYU WINTHROP HOSPITAL

swear by mate de coca — a tea made from the coca plant — to relieve the effects of altitude sickness, but there is no scientific data that shows it can prevent or treat it, Fiorito said. And because the coca plant is the source of cocaine, you will test positive for several days for cocaine.

Some travelers may take more risks than others, and even a traveler who rigorously follows rules on what is safe and not safe to eat or drink can get sick. For example, plates and pots and pans in restaurants may be washed in contaminated water, and even a relatively small amount of that water can get you sick, Fiorito said.

Lillian Butungi Niwagaba, director of NYIT's Center for Global Health, said that's why it's important to pack recommended medications in advance.

"You have to be aware that some things you may do may make you sick," Niwagaba said in an interview after the event. "But make sure you have the medicines [before you leave]. Some of these countries may not have the medicines you need."

Felony charge for boy who brought handgun to school

BY ELLEN YAN
AND JOHN HILDEBRAND
ellen.yan@newsday.com
john.hildebrand@newsday.com

A 10-year-old boy was charged with a felony Tuesday after bringing a loaded handgun to a Baldwin elementary school, where a "textbook" response resulted in the discovery of the weapon, Nassau County police said.

The boy, a fourth-grader at Meadow Elementary School, was processed with his father present and faces a charge of criminal possession of a weapon on school grounds, officials said.

He brought a .40-caliber semiautomatic Glock to school Monday, police said, and the gun contained one round in the chamber and several in the magazine as he showed it to a friend, police said. The boy's name was not released because he is being treated as a juvenile. He is due back in Family Court April 5, officials said.

Police were called to the school Monday after a sharp-eyed lunch monitor spotted the boy and another student repeatedly peering into the boy's blue fabric lunch bag in the lunchroom, county officials and police

said. Their fascination attracted the suspicions of the monitor, who went over to look inside before taking the boy to the principal's office. A spokesman for the Baldwin school district declined to say whether the fourth-grader was back in school Tuesday but said district officials gave parents and students safety tips.

"It was a productive day at the Meadow Elementary School," spokesman Robert Leonard said. "Appropriate disciplinary actions are being pursued in relation to this matter. The principal shared with parents advice and tips on discussing this incident

with their children in a productive manner." School officials also reminded them of the importance of seeing something and saying something, he said.

State education law sets out potential disciplinary action of students. In the case of a student who brings a weapon to school, the law is based on the federal Gun-Free Schools Act, said Jay Worona, deputy executive director and general counsel of the New York State School Boards Association. Generally, the law provides that a student who brings a gun or other dangerous weapon to school will be sus-

pending for a year. If the pupil is a special education student, he or she is suspended for 45 days, Worona said. A district superintendent can decide on a shorter suspension based on special circumstances.

In such cases, the student is to be provided with "immediate" free alternative education starting within two days after suspension.

County officials have said the gun is unregistered and that the boy told authorities he received the gun Sunday during a party at his uncle's house.

With Joie Tyrrell