

Guarding Your Health in Israel  
6<sup>th</sup> Edition

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## Guarding Your Health in Israel

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The many situations that you must confront as a new immigrant, from bureaucratic procedures, to finding yourself a home and employment, can take their toll in stress and in neglect of your basic state of health. Even immigrants who have been in the country for a lengthy period of time may sometimes find themselves confronted with health issues particular to being in Israel.

The goal of this guidebook is to familiarize you with various topics and offer general advice. It is based on recommendations from the Ministry of Health, the Institute for Road Safety, the Society for the Protection of Nature, and other bodies.

**NOTE: This booklet provides general advice only. It does not in any way provide medical advice or diagnosis, or take the place of a medical consultation with a qualified professional.**

For detailed information about health services in Israel, consult the booklet entitled "The Health System in Israel," available from the Publications Department. You can also consult the booklets entitled "Guide to Services for the Handicapped" and "Where to Turn." See the order form at the back of this booklet.

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This is the sixth edition of this booklet, and hereby nullifies all other editions. The information in this booklet is based on data provided by various official sources. Details are subject to change. In case of any discrepancy, the regulations of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, and other official bodies will prevail.

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## Summertime - And The Living is...Dangerous!

Israel's strong, Mediterranean sun, coupled with hot, dry weather in many parts of the country, for the majority of the year, pose health risks that include dehydration and heat stroke, as well as long-term damage from exposure to the sun. According to the Ministry of Health, the great majority of skin cancer cases in Israel are caused by sun-damage. Other consequences of sun damage can include severe burns, freckles and moles (which can be precancerous), cataracts, and premature aging and wrinkling of the skin.

In order to protect yourself, try to avoid prolonged exposure to the sun between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Babies should not be exposed to the sun after 9:00 a.m. If you must be out during these hours, remember these guidelines:

- Use a sunscreen of at least 15 SPF or higher. You should apply sunscreen at least 1/2 hour before going outside. Reapply sunscreen every few hours, or after exercising, swimming, or playing. Even waterproof sunscreen can come off when you towel yourself, sweat, or spend extended periods of time in the water. Lipstick or lip balm with at least 15 SPF is also a must, and you can look for moisturizers and makeup foundations that also contain an SPF. Don't forget special sunscreen for children and babies. Remember that risks are present even in cooler winter weather.
- Avoid clothing that exposes sensitive skin to the sun. Wear light, loose garments with sleeves, in natural fabrics such as cotton. White and other light colors deflect the sun, while dark colors absorb heat. Not only will you be protected, but you will also feel cooler and more comfortable.
- Wear a hat with a brim to keep the sun off your face. A hat with a wide brim will also protect your eyes, ears, and the back of your neck, all of which are prone to overexposure to the sun. Again, a light color will deflect more sun than a darker one.



- Don't forget sunglasses! This goes for children as well as adults. Look for a pair designed to protect your eyes from harmful ultra-violet rays. Sunglasses that provide 99-100% UVA and UVB protection can reduce sun exposure that can result in cataracts and other eye damage.
- Remember, the sun's rays can also affect you when you are driving, as well as when they reflect off sand and water.
- Don't forget to drink plenty of water. During the summer months, you can dehydrate even before you feel thirsty. Dehydration can make you severely ill, and in some cases can even be fatal. If you find it difficult to drink plain water all of the time, you can try adding a few fresh mint leaves (*na'ana*) or a slice of lemon. Try to accustom your children to drinking plain water as well, without adding sweet syrups such as the ever-popular "*petel*" (raspberry flavoring) that Israeli children love. The added sugar will just make them thirsty again sooner. Remember that caffeinated drinks (coffee, tea, colas) can dehydrate you as well. Also, make sure that pets have a constant supply of clean, fresh water.



The Israel Cancer Association sponsors an annual Skin Cancer Awareness Week. During this event, held in the beginning of the summer, hundreds of skin cancer examination booths are set up in public places throughout the country, and offer free skin examinations.

During the months of April through October, you will hear radio and television weather reports refer to the "*omes hahom*." This is roughly translated as the intensity of the heat, and refers to a combination of the temperature, humidity, and wind speed. In areas where the heat is very intense, it is possible to suffer from heat stroke even if you are careful to drink enough water, especially if you are exerting yourself physically. Try to avoid activities such as jogging, playing tennis, taking long walks, or running lots of errands, during the hottest parts of the day. Only allow children to play outside for short periods of time, and make sure that they have plenty of shade and take



periodic rest breaks. Don't take any chances - heat stroke can be fatal! Seek medical attention **immediately** if you or a family member begin to experience any of the symptoms of heat stroke, including weakness, dizziness, or nausea.

**Never** leave children or pets to wait for you in an automobile, even for a few minutes, even if the windows are down. A car left standing in the sun can quickly heat up to temperatures of 40 degrees Centigrade (104 Fahrenheit) and higher. Sadly, there are fatalities every summer.

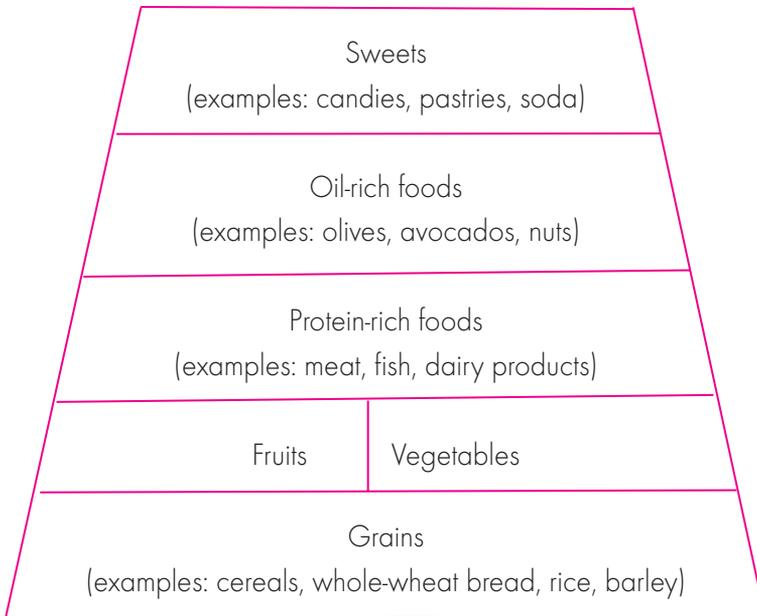


## Eat! Eat! Proper Nutrition

Maintaining proper eating habits, and getting the nutrition you need, is easy in Israel.

With the wide variety of fresh, seasonal produce, low-fat dairy products, and a growing number of low sugar and low calorie items on the shelves, it is simple to find healthful Israeli substitutes for foods you are used to.

The Ministry of Health recommends eating a variety of foods based on the pyramid principle, with those foods at the base of the pyramid constituting the bulk of your diet, and smaller quantities of the foods found higher up. See the diagram below.



The following tips can assist you in maintaining healthy eating habits in Israel:

- Many Israelis have the habit of eating their main meal in the middle of the day, and a lighter meal in the evening. This gives you a chance to burn off more calories, and have more energy to get you through your afternoon.



- It is very important to wash all fresh produce before eating it. Israeli produce tends to reach the shelves with high concentrations of pesticides and dirt.
- Beware of purchasing dairy products that have been left for too long in the sun.



## Eggs

Eggs that are improperly handled or stored can cause salmonella poisoning. Babies and the elderly are particularly at risk. Be sure to buy eggs only from air-conditioned shops that sell the eggs in closed, disposable containers. Check that the eggs have a stamp that indicates the name and address of the processing facility, grade of the eggs, and sell-by date. Avoid purchasing cracked or broken eggs.

Washing eggs before storing them can actually cause salmonella bacteria to be absorbed through the shell. If you must wash eggs, do so immediately prior to use. They should be stored in a refrigerator, in their original container if possible. Store eggs for no longer than 30 days. Never use cracked or broken eggs for any other purposes than hard-boiling or for baking.

## Labeling

All packaged foods must be labeled with nutritional information and a sell-by date. Beware of purchasing foods from an unknown source, or without the proper labeling.

The word *rechivim* (רְחִיבִים) means ingredients, and all ingredients of the product should be listed in order of their prominence.



The law requires that nutritional information include the following:

- The calorie content - *caloriot* (קלוריות) or *energia* (אנרגיה) per 100 grams for solid foods, and 100 milliliters for liquids.
- Protein - *chelbon* (חלבון).
- Cholesterol - *cholestral* (כולסטרוול).
- Carbohydrates - *pachmimot* (פחמימות).
- Fats - *shemen* (שמן) and saturated fats - *shemen ravui* (שמן רווי).



On some packages you may find the words *cal* (קל), light; *dal* (דל) lean; or *mufchat* (מופחת), reduced. Manufacturers who advertise products with these terms must adhere to the following guidelines:

- A beverage labeled "*cal dal caloriot*" must contain no more than 20 calories per 100 ml, or 200 per liter.
- Food items labeled "*cal dal caloriot*" may contain no more than 40 calories per 100 grams.
- An item advertised as "*dal shuman*" must contain no more than 2 grams of fat per 100 grams.
- A label claiming "*dal nitrate*" means that no more than 100 mgs of nitrates per 100 grams are permitted.
- A claim of "*dal cholestral*" means the product may contain no more than 30 mgs of cholesterol per 100 grams.
- An item claiming to be "*lelo cholestral*" (without cholesterol) may contain no more than 100 mgs. of cholesterol per 100 grams.
- An item advertised as "*mufchat*" may not contain more than 2/3 of the calories, fats, etc. than the regular version of product.



## Avoid Food Poisoning

Bacteria that cause food poisoning exist on all types of uncooked food, including raw meats, eggs, fruit, and vegetables. Symptoms of food poisoning include nausea, stomach pain, diarrhea, and fever. If you experience any of these symptoms, consult with a doctor. If your diagnosis is food poisoning, and you can trace the poisoning to an identifiable source, you must inform the Ministry of Health. Whenever possible, you must supply the Ministry with a sample of the food source.

Be sure to store all food properly. Your refrigerator thermostat should read at least 5 degrees Celsius. Put any meat, chicken, and fish that you will not cook or eat within two days of purchase into the freezer. Thaw frozen meats and fish in the refrigerator or in the microwave. Always wash your hands before and after handling food. Have separate work areas for raw foods and foods that are ready to eat. Be sure to cook food thoroughly, and serve it hot. If you can keep your hand on the pot handle for more than a few seconds, it is not hot enough. When refrigerating large quantities of soups, meat dishes, etc., divide them into small portions so they will cool rapidly. Hot, bulky foods in the refrigerator can raise the temperature of foods already cooled.



Be sure to store dry foods (flour, rice, pasta, etc.) in airtight containers made of hard plastic or glass. Do not use plastic bags, as all kinds of pests can easily chew through them. Store your containers on high shelves. Be sure to check items for the presence of bugs and other contaminants before use. Beware of purchasing improperly stored foods. Food weevils (*tola'ot mazon* in Hebrew) or their eggs are often present in packages of rice, barley, cereals, popcorn, beans, and other similar dry items. If not controlled, an infestation can spread rapidly to other foods. An easy way to prevent any infestation is to store these types of food items in the refrigerator or freezer following purchase. Keeping foodstuffs in the freezer for at least 72 hours is enough to kill all weevils at any stage of



development.

When you're shopping for groceries, pick up all your non-perishable items first, especially during the summertime, when food is likely to spoil faster. If you have a long drive home, or have other errands to run before returning home, you may want to consider keeping a cooler in your car to hold the items that need refrigeration. If you are having your groceries delivered from the supermarket, you may wish to take your perishables straight home with you.



Always check expiration dates, and avoid purchasing items that will expire quickly unless you plan to serve them within a short time. Avoid meats, poultry and fish that have any unusual color or odor. Ground beef should be completely red. When buying fresh fish, check that the eyes look clear and unclouded.

When you use leafy vegetables such as lettuce or cabbage, discard the outermost layer of leaves, since they have had the most contact with bacteria and pesticides.



## Boning Up on Osteoporosis

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In Israel today some 400,000 women in the 55-75 age-group suffer from osteoporosis. Osteoporosis, also known as “porous bones,” leads to fractures, loss of height, disability, and prolonged dependence on nursing care. Statistics show that almost 50% of all women are at risk of developing osteoporosis. It can affect men as well. Bone scans (to measure bone density and assess risk) and many of the drugs that treat osteoporosis, are offered to specific categories of eligible patients as part of the “Basket of Health Services,” as defined by the National Health Insurance Law. Consult with your health fund to clarify their guidelines.

There is no real cure for osteoporosis, and you cannot completely prevent it. Fortunately, however, there are measures that every person can take in order to delay onset, and to diminish the severity, of this insidious crippler.

### What is Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis occurs when the amount of calcium in the bones decreases to the point where the bones become brittle and prone to fracture. A diagnosis of osteoporosis applies when bone density has decreased to the extent that fractures can occur with even mild stress. In the latter stages of the disease, pain, disfigurement and debilitation are frequent. After large amounts of calcium have been lost, the spinal column begins to collapse, resulting in a stooped posture. Patients can lose as much as six inches of height.

### Risk Factors

A number of factors contribute to your risk for osteoporosis:

Bone breakdown appears to speed up following menopause, when the ovaries stop producing estrogen. Younger women who do not have their periods for three months or longer, women who have undergone surgical removal of the ovaries, and women who have never given birth also seem to have a higher risk factor.



Other factors including smoking, drinking large amounts of coffee and alcohol, being underweight, dietary factors including excess sodium, and lack of exercise. Long-term use of certain medications including corticosteroids (such as those used to treat asthma), anti-seizure medications, and some hormones used to treat thyroid conditions and endometriosis, can contribute to reduced bone density. Discuss any medications you may be taking with your doctor.

Vitamin D, which is absorbed through the skin on contact with sunlight, or taken in supplements, is necessary for absorption of calcium by the body. Sunlight is a primary source of vitamin D. While Israel certainly does not lack sunlight, extreme avoidance of sun exposure, and heavy use of sunscreen, can result in vitamin D deficiency.

There is evidence that genetic factors help to determine bone density. If your mother or grandmother suffered from loss of height or fractures, your risk for osteoporosis is usually greater.

## **Fighting Osteoporosis**

Making lifestyle changes can often help reduce your risk of osteoporosis, as well as help you to become healthier and stronger all around. These include:

- Increased intake of calcium and vitamin D can help to maintain bone density, and reduce the risk of a first fracture. Calcium is found in dairy products and other foods, or is taken as a supplement. Sufficient calcium is crucial during childhood and adolescence as well, when the maximum bone density is being established. Most adults need between 1200-2000 mgs of calcium per day. Consult with your doctor about your specific needs.
- Exercise is critical for slowing down the progression of osteoporosis. The best kinds of exercises put stress on your bones, which can keep them hard and even increase bone mass by as much as 2-8 percent a year. Push-ups, race-walking, lifting weights and jumping rope are all good types of exercises to try. High-impact exercises such as step aerobics can increase the



risk of fractures in older women; however, in pre-menopausal women they can be very protective. For older women, even moderate exercise such as walking or gardening can help to reduce the risk of fractures. Careful weight training can be beneficial to older women as well. Remember to consult with your doctor before beginning any exercise program.

- Reduce your coffee intake; add milk to whatever coffee you do drink, and drink only moderate amounts of alcohol.
- Speak to your doctor about arranging a bone density scan and to check your eligibility for health fund coverage for the scan.
- Prevent falls. Keep bathroom lights on at night, and have grab bars installed where necessary (such as near the bath). Remove loose rugs and superfluous items from floors and passageways, and keep cords and wires behind furniture.

## Calcium-Rich Foods

Calcium-rich foods include the following:

- Low-fat milk, cheese, cottage cheese and yogurt (2-3 servings per day).
- Calcium-enriched tofu
- Legumes and soybeans
- Sesame seeds
- Almonds
- Fortified whole wheat bread
- Broccoli and other dark, leafy green vegetables
- Dates and figs
- Canned salmon (with bones)
- Canned sardines (with bones)



## **Head-Lice - Keeping "Ahead" of the Game**

According to figures from the Ministry of Health, 75% of all Israeli children will contract head-lice at least once in their lives. While in most cases, there is no danger involved in a head-lice infestation, it can be very irritating and uncomfortable. The following are Ministry of Health guidelines for prevention, detection, and treatment of head lice.

Lice are small parasites that live their lives on human scalps. They do not live on any other carrier, such as house pets. They feed off human blood, and bite 4-5 times per day. They grow to 1-3 centimeters and are usually gray, brown, or red in color. When a head is infested, it is usually easier to see lice eggs (known as nits) than the actual lice. Lice attach their eggs to individual hairs with a strong adhesive substance. Live eggs usually look like little amber-colored beads, while those that have hatched are white. Infestation occurs when a head, comes into contact with another, infested, head; for example, when children are playing together. It is rare for lice to be passed through combs or brushes, but it is still a good idea to caution your child not to use other children's combs or brushes. It is also wise to keep your own head out of contact with that of an infested child.



The main symptom of lice infestation is itching. As soon as you see your child begin to scratch his head constantly, check the entire head for lice or their eggs. If you do discover lice or nits, there is a variety of shampoo treatments that you can use. The catch is that lice develop immunity to the shampoos easily, so it is best to ask a doctor or pharmacist which treatment is the most effective at that time.

Following treatment according to product instructions, it is then necessary to comb your child's entire head, using a fine-toothed lice comb, obtainable in any pharmacy. It is vital to be as thorough as possible, since if even one live egg is left, it can re-infest the



head. Keep combing on a daily basis until you are certain that there are no more nits or lice. Most products require you to repeat the treatment after a specified length of time.

Prevention of lice requires some effort, but it is worth it. Check your child's head every two days or so to make sure it is lice-free. This way, if you see signs of nits, you can remove them all before they hatch and begin biting and breeding. It is also a good idea to run a lice comb through your child's hair every two or three days. The best time to do this is after a shampoo when the hair is still wet. Using conditioner makes combing easier. There is some evidence that using rosemary oil can sometimes help repel lice. You can purchase rosemary oil in pharmacies and health-food shops; you can also use rosemary shampoos and conditioners.

Launder any sheets, pillowcases, and towels used by an infested person in very hot water.



## Out And About - Safety on Hikes and Excursions

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Hikes and excursions (*tiyulim*) to beauty and nature spots are a popular part of Israeli life. In order to keep your *tiyul* safe as well as enjoyable, be sure to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Plan your *tiyul* in accordance with weather conditions. Make a point of obtaining up-to-date information on conditions along your route from a qualified source at the location, such as the Nature Reserves Authority or the local municipal authority.
- Don't set out on long *tiyulim* during the hottest parts of the day, especially on days when the heat is very intense. If your *tiyul* is to take place in a desert area, it should be planned for the cooler hours regardless of the weather i.e. early in the morning or in the late afternoon.
- Don't hike after dark, and don't set out on your route unless you are certain you will complete it before nightfall. If you find yourself out once night has fallen, and your route is unfamiliar, or in an area that contains canyons and cliffs, stay where you are and try to get help. It is recommended to have a cellular phone or other communication system with you. Before you set out, make sure that friends or family members know where you will be, and when you expect to return.
- Make sure that each person is supplied with several liters of water. Avoid sweet or fizzy drinks. Be certain that there is enough water to last the length of the route in order to avoid having to drink from unfamiliar sources.
- Be sure that you are wearing proper shoes - i.e. sturdy, closed shoes with high tops. A hat, long sleeves, and sunscreen are also musts.
- Be sure to use marked routes only, and stay on the designated trails. Don't wander off to explore. If an area is closed to hikers, it is usually for a good reason. You should have a detailed map of the area with you.



- It's safest to hike or camp with at least one companion. If you'll be entering a remote area, your group should have a minimum of four people; this way, if one person is hurt, another can stay with the victim while two people go for help.
- On winter days, the danger of flash floods in desert areas should not be taken lightly. If you are in a low-lying area and see or hear anything unusual, such as a rumbling sound, or a sudden rush of water, get to high ground **immediately**. Do not try to outrun the flood. Leave belongings behind if you have to. Never try to drive across a flooded road, or into or across any flooded area. If your car stalls in rapidly rising water, abandon it and climb to higher ground.
- Be careful of snakes and scorpions. Don't pick up rocks, or turn them over, since snakes and scorpions are most likely to be found lurking underneath. If you see a snake or scorpion, avoid handling it, and get away from it as quickly as you can. If your *tiyul* involves sleeping out overnight, be sure to shake out shoes and clothing before putting them on again in the morning.

There are some 40 species of snakes in Israel. Although most are harmless, some species, particularly vipers, are venomous. If anyone is bitten, get to an emergency room or Magen David Adom station **immediately**. Try to capture the creature if possible, and bring it along for medical staff to identify, in order to ascertain the correct treatment. If you cannot capture the snake, try to memorize as much about it as possible (size, coloring, etc.) or photograph it.

If someone is bitten, you can use a snakebite kit if you have one, but it is not recommended to try to suck out the venom by mouth. Instead, apply a constricting band (not a tourniquet) above the bitten area, and keep the area lower than the heart. Cool the bitten area with ice until you obtain medical help. Do not give the victim anything to eat or drink, keep them as calm and quiet as possible, and have them move as little as necessary.



There are numerous species of scorpions found throughout Israel. Some cause harmless, although painful, stings, while the stings of others can be dangerous, even fatal. Stings can cause severe pain, inflammation, cramps, nausea, and breathing difficulties. Children and the elderly are especially at risk for complications. If a scorpion stings someone, seek medical attention as fast as possible. Place ice or a cold compress on the site of the sting. You can try to remove the stinger with a tweezers or other implement, but if it the stinger does not come out easily, leave it for medical personnel to remove.

In any case of being bitten or stung by any other type of animal or insect, seek medical help immediately if any of these symptoms occur: rash, swelling, paleness, severe pain, cramps, weakness, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, a constricted feeling in the chest or throat, or shortness of breath.

- On hot, dry days, the risk of fire is a real one. Light fires only in places intended for that purpose, such as picnic areas set up in Keren Kayemet forests. Be certain that you put out your fire when you have finished with it. Never toss lit cigarettes on the ground.



## At the Beach

Each year there are tragic drownings at the country's beaches, with the Mediterranean coast claiming the highest number of victims. Abide by the following important guidelines in order to avoid joining the statistics.

- Don't enter waters where swimming is prohibited, and where there are no lifeguards.
- At beaches where swimming is permitted, you will find a flag displayed. If the flag is white, it means that it has been deemed safe to enter the water. A red flag means that conditions make swimming risky. If you see a black flag this means that the sea is very dangerous. You are forbidden to enter the water when the black flag is flying.



- Never go into the water at the beach unless you know how to swim.
- Never swim at night or in the early morning, even in permitted areas, when there is no lifeguard.

While these cautions apply to all of Israel's beaches, you must take special care when swimming in the Mediterranean. The waves of the Mediterranean can be extremely high and forceful. On a hot day with no wind, the waves can reach heights of up to 2 meters. When such waves approach the shore, they can present a serious hazard to bathers. Another very real danger is the Mediterranean currents. These currents are very swift and powerful and can suck a bather far out to sea in a matter of seconds. In the face of currents, the greatest mistake one can make is to swim straight out from the shore. It is much safer to swim parallel to the shore. The area of a current is limited, and if you pass through one quickly, there is a greater chance of coming out of a danger zone easily.

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Note that the currents become even stronger at night, making night swimming a potentially fatal activity.

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Avoid going into the water if there have been reports of *medusot* (jellyfish). *Medusot* generally appear between late June and early August. Their stings can be very painful, and in some cases cause rashes, cramps, nausea, vomiting, and respiratory difficulties. If a jellyfish stings you, wash the area of the sting in vinegar, not water. Do not apply ice. Seek medical aid if symptoms are severe.

The Red Sea is famous for its coral, but it is dangerous to enter waters where there are live corals without shoes or flippers on your feet. Be careful not to touch live coral. If you are cut or stung by coral, seek medical assistance. Do not break off pieces of coral to take home for a souvenir.

The floor of the Red Sea has a steep slope, and deep water begins close to the shore. Strong northerly winds can suck a swimmer out to sea.





The concentration of salts and minerals that give the Dead Sea its famous buoyancy, and that have so many healthful properties, also have their share of dangers. As little as one swallow of Dead Sea water can be fatal. Be careful to keep your face out of the water, bathe only in permitted areas, don't remain in the water for extended periods, and don't go out too far.

Be sure that the salt water does not enter your eyes or mouth. This can cause serious burns.

The Sea of Galilee (the Kinneret) has a steep slope on its western floor, and the water becomes deep very close to shore. Strong westerly winds can tow swimmers out to the middle of the lake.



## Don't Drive Yourself Crazy - Some Tips on Road Safety

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Unfortunately, it is no secret that Israel's roads can be dangerous places. The Institute for Traffic Safety of the Ministry of Transportation offers the following reminders to promote safe driving:

- Drive in accordance with road conditions, including the weather and the state of the traffic surrounding you. Remember that the first rain of winter makes the roads particularly slick, and is one of the most hazardous driving times.
- Use your headlights at all times, especially if the road is narrow, if the sun is behind you, at twilight, and at dawn. Note that the law requires headlights at all times on inter-city roads from the first of November until the thirty-first of March. It is also recommended to keep your headlights on within the city during these months.
- The law requires all drivers to keep a reflective vest with them inside their vehicle. Any time that you stop and exit your vehicle on an inter-city highway, you must don the reflective vest.
- Driving in hot weather can cause you to become tired and prevent you from being as alert as you should be. Try to nap before a long driving trip. Keep the radio on or music playing. If you are carrying passengers, be sure that at least one of them is awake and keeps you talking. Keep running your air conditioner so that the cold can help you stay awake.
- Be sure to stop as often as possible to have a snack, to drink something and to stretch your muscles. Stop your car in a secure place only; for example, a parking lot or gas station, and never on the side of the road!
- It is both dangerous and illegal to speak into a hand-held cellular phone when driving. Talk in your car on a speakerphone only.



## **Make A Note - Tay Sachs Testing**

Tay Sachs is a genetically transmitted condition that afflicts newborn children. It is found primarily among those of Ashkenazi (European) descent, although cases have also occurred among those from other communities. According to the Ministry of Health, one in thirty individuals of Ashkenazi descent carries the gene.

Tay Sachs causes severe developmental deterioration and eventual death. The first symptoms appear at about six months of age. They include an almost complete loss of the physical capabilities that the child has developed prior to the onset of the disease, as well as mental retardation. Death usually occurs by the age of four years. There is no cure.

Children can only develop Tay Sachs when both of their parents carry the Tay Sachs gene. A simple blood test can reveal the presence of the gene, and is offered free of charge by the Ministry of Health, at locations throughout Israel (see Useful Addresses). The Ministry urges testing for the gene for all couples prior to having children. Further, since not all children born to Tay Sachs carriers develop the condition, the fact that a couple has healthy children does not guarantee that subsequent children may not be afflicted. It is recommended that even couples with children undergo testing. Pregnant women can also be tested.



In most cases, only one member of a couple needs to be tested. If the test is negative, then there is no need for the partner to be tested. If, however, the test does reveal the presence of the gene, then the partner will be tested. If both members of the couple test positive for the Tay Sachs gene, the Ministry of Health can advise them of their options.

### **Immunizations**

Be aware that a number of immunizations are given to newborns in Israel today that may not be provided in other countries, including Hepatitis A and B, and meningitis. Consult with your physician or



"*Tachana LeBriut HaMishpacha*" (Family Health Centers, formerly known as "*Tipat Halav*") for more information.



### **HIV Testing**

The Ministry of Health offers free testing for HIV at locations throughout the country. See Useful Addresses. All tests are conducted on an anonymous basis. Be sure to call in advance to check days and hours.



## **Mad Dogs Do Go Out In The Mid-Day Sun... Avoiding Rabies**

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Since 1989, the incidence of rabies (*calevet*) in Israel has been on the rise. In 1996 and 1997, the first human cases of rabies in Israel were reported in more than 25 years.

Rabies is a potentially fatal disease. Caught very early on, it can be treated in both humans and animals. Once the victim becomes symptomatic, however, it is no longer possible to alter the course of the disease, and death is the inevitable outcome.

Rabies is a viral disease, and can infect all types of mammals, including foxes, jackals, wolves, horses, cattle, bats, cats, dogs, and humans. Research shows that foxes are the primary carriers of rabies in Israel. The infection is transmitted through the bite or scratch of an animal with the disease. It can also be transmitted when an infected animal licks cut or broken skin, or through contact between its saliva and an orifice such as the eyes, mouth, nose, or ears.

The risk of encountering an infected animal is higher in rural locations, and in communities close to wilderness areas. The Golan Heights, the Jezreel Valley, Jerusalem and the surrounding areas, and the Arava have the highest incidence of rabies.

### **Symptoms**

Animals generally develop rabies symptoms within two weeks to two months of infection. Rabid animals usually stop eating and drinking, and may appear to want to be left alone. After the initial onset of symptoms, the animal may become vicious or begin to show signs of paralysis. Some rabid animals bite at the slightest provocation and others may be drowsy and difficult to arouse.

Other symptoms include fever, restlessness, fear of people, difficulty in swallowing, and digestive problems. Within a few days, the restlessness turns into panic attacks, accompanied by additional symptoms including paralysis. Death usually takes place within 3-4 days.



In humans, symptoms usually begin to manifest within 20-60 days of exposure. The initial symptoms include fever, headaches, lack of appetite, and vomiting. They are followed by more severe symptoms, including difficulty in breathing, restlessness and insomnia, anxiety, nervousness, and depression. One of the most prominent symptoms is the inability to swallow liquids. When water touches the pharynx, it causes muscle spasms and severe pain. For this reason, rabies is also known as "hydrophobia." The patient will usually die within 3-5 days of exhibiting the first symptoms.



### **How to Protect Yourself**

The following measures can help protect your family and your pets against rabies:

- Rabies vaccinations are both desirable and mandated by law for dogs. The law does not require cats to be vaccinated, but it is advisable.
- Never walk your dog without a leash and muzzle (also required by law). Don't let your cats or other pets wander about unsupervised.
- Avoid contact with any unknown animal. Report any stray animal exhibiting strange behavior to the municipal veterinary authorities, including wild animals that seem too friendly.
- Keep doors and unscreened windows closed.
- Keep outdoor trash bins closed.

If your pet is injured in a fight with any stray or unfamiliar animal, don't touch bleeding wounds with your bare hands. Wash the wounds with running water, and contact your veterinarian. It is possible that your pet will need an immediate rabies booster injection. It is also possible that the municipal authorities will need to locate the stray animal and test it for rabies.



## If You Are Bitten

If you are bitten or scratched by any stray or unfamiliar animal, including dogs, cats, foxes, wolves, bats, or rabbits, you **must** take the following steps:

- Don't try to trap the animal by yourself. Contact your local municipal authority, which will take appropriate measures to find and capture the animal.
- Wash the wound with soap and water, and rinse with running water for at least 10 minutes. Apply some form of antiseptic such as iodine.
- Go to the nearest branch office of the Ministry of Health as soon as possible. Bring vaccination records with you if you can. It is recommended to call in advance to find out exactly when to arrive.

At the Ministry of Health office, the rabies clerk (*pakid hacalevet*) will interview you and fill out a report. The presiding physician will determine medical treatment according to the circumstances of the biting incident and the severity of the wound. The Ministry will also determine the necessary steps to take with the animal, including impounding and monitoring, inoculation, or putting it down.

When the Ministry of Health branches are closed (for example, on Shabbat and holidays,) go to the nearest hospital emergency room. The hospital will treat the wound, and will consult with the duty doctor in charge of rabies at the Ministry of Health.

Following hospital treatment, you must then report to the Ministry of Health branch office as soon as possible, in order to file a report. Be sure to follow all Ministry of Health instructions regarding continuation of your treatment.



## Useful Addresses and Telephone Numbers



Telephone numbers and some addresses change frequently in Israel. Consult the latest telephone directory or the information operator if you do not reach the number listed here. When a number has been changed there may not be a recorded message noting the change. Thus, if the number continues to be unanswered, check whether it is still in use.

Address

Telephone

### Ministry of Immigrant Absorption

[www.klita.gov.il](http://www.klita.gov.il)

[info@moia.gov.il](mailto:info@moia.gov.il)

#### Main Office

2 Rehov Kaplan, Kiryat Ben Gurion  
Jerusalem 91950

National Telephone Information Center

(03) 9733333

Public Inquiries

(02) 6752765

### Southern and Jerusalem District Headquarters

31 Rehov Zalman Shazar

(08) 6261216

Beer Sheva

Fax: (08) 6230811

### Haifa and Northern District Headquarters

15 Rehov HaPalyam

(04) 8631114

Haifa

Fax: (04) 8631110

### Tel Aviv and Central District Headquarters

6 Rehov Esther HaMalka

1-599-500-901

Tel Aviv

Fax: (03) 5209173



Address	Telephone
<b>Haifa and Northern District Headquarters</b> 15 Sderot Palyam Haifa 33095	(04) 8631111 Fax: (04) 8632336
<b>Tel Aviv and Central District Headquarters</b> 6 Rehov Esther HaMalka Tel Aviv 64398	(03) 5209113 Fax: (03) 5209173
<b>Jerusalem District Office</b> 15 Rehov Hillel	1-599-500-923 Fax: (02) 6249398
<b>Publications Department</b>	Fax: (02) 6241585

## Emergency Telephone Numbers

**Police** 100  
www.police.gov.il

**Magen David Adom** 101  
www.mda.org.il

### Emergency Center for the Deaf (*Moked Herum*)

The Emergency Center makes it possible to send calls to Magen David Adom, the Police, and the Fire Department, by fax.

Tel Aviv (03) 5216445

North (04) 8511954, (04) 8530161

**Fire Department** 102

### Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel

www.1202.org.il

National Hotline 1202

Hotline for Religious Women (02) 6730002

Hotline for Men and Boys 1203

Religious Men's Hotline (02) 5328000



Address	Telephone
<p><b>National Poison Control Center</b>  Rambam Hospital  For medical information and instructions.</p>	(04) 8541900
<p><b>Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals</b>  Clinic and emergency line, Jerusalem  (24 hours/7 days a week)  www.petking.co.il</p>	(02) 6433352
<p>Tel Aviv  (7 days a week)  www.sPCA.org.il</p>	1-599-502-005
<p>Haifa  (7 days a week)  www.petproject.org.il</p>	(04) 8729696
<p>Beer Sheva  (7 days a week)  sPCA.netfirms.com/vet.htm</p>	(08) 6238118
<p><b>Eran Mental Health Hotline</b>  www.eran.org.il, info@eran.org.il  Senior Citizens  Internet chat- ICQ Number  Soldiers</p>	1201 *3201 12010 *2201
<p><b>Domestic Violence Hotline</b></p>	1-800-220000



Address	Telephone
<b>The Ministry of Health</b>	
www.health.gov.il 2 Rehov Ben Tabai Jerusalem 91010	(02) 6705705
<b>District Health Offices</b>	
17 Rehov David Noy, <b>Acco</b>	(04) 9955111
Barzilai Medical Center, <b>Ashkelon</b>	(08) 6745555
4 Rehov HaTikva, <b>Beer Sheva</b>	(08) 6263511
13 Rehov Hillel Yaffe, <b>Hadera</b>	(04) 6240801
15 A Rehov HaParsim, <b>Haifa</b>	(04) 8633111
86 Rehov Yaffo, <b>Jerusalem</b>	(02) 5314811
23 Sd. Weizmann, <b>Netanya</b>	(09) 8300111
31 Rehov Achad HaAm, <b>Petach Tikva</b>	(03) 9051818
91 Rehov Herzl, <b>Ramle</b>	(03) 9788660
80 Rehov Remez, <b>Rehovot</b>	(08) 9485858
12 Rehov HaArba'a, <b>Tel Aviv</b>	(03) 5634848



Address	Telephone
1 Rehov Alchadaf, <b>Tiberias</b>	(04) 6710300
52 Rehov HaPalmach, <b>Tzfat</b>	(04) 6994200

## National Food Service

*(Sherut Mazon Artzi)*

pniot\_hazibut@fcs.health.gov.il

14 Rehov HaArba'a

(03) 5634706

Tel Aviv 64739

Complaints about food poisoning, food hygiene, etc. can also be submitted to your local district health office. It is necessary to include a sample of the item.

## Tay Sachs Testing

Tay Sachs testing, free of charge, is offered in locations throughout the country. Call for times and dates of testing.

Bnai Zion Hospital, <b>Haifa</b>	(04) 8359851
Rambam Hospital, <b>Haifa</b>	(04) 8542456
HaEmek Hospital, <b>Afula</b>	(04) 6495446
Soroka Hospital, <b>Beer Sheva</b>	(08) 6400749
Kaplan Hospital, <b>Rehovot</b>	(08) 9441384
Asaf HaRofeh Hospital, <b>Tzrifin</b>	(08) 9778211
Western Galilee Hosp, <b>Nahariya</b>	(04) 9107493
Barzilie Hospital, <b>Ashkelon</b>	(08) 6745739
Meir Hospital, <b>Kfar Sava</b>	(09) 7471059
Hadassah Hospital, <b>Ein Kerem, Jerusalem</b>	(02) 6776329
HaCarmel Hospital, <b>Haifa</b>	(04) 8250918
Sha'arei Tzedek Hospital, <b>Jerusalem</b>	(02) 6655130
Bielenson Hospital, <b>Petach Tikva</b>	(03) 9377658
Sorosky Hospital, <b>Tel Aviv</b>	(03) 6974703



Address

Telephone

## Israel Association for Osteoporosis and Bone Diseases

[www.osteoporosis.co.il](http://www.osteoporosis.co.il)

The Association offers information and counseling.

32 HaSacham

(03) 9274040

Petach Tikva

## The Israel Cancer Society

[www.cancer.org.il](http://www.cancer.org.il)

[info@cancer.org.il](mailto:info@cancer.org.il)

Telemayda Information Line

1-800-599995

## AIDS Testing

Anonymous AIDS testing is carried out at the following locations.  
Call in advance to check days and hours.

Hadassah Hospital - Strauss Health Center  
24 Rehov Strauss, **Jerusalem**

(02) 6231921

Ichilov Hospital, **Tel Aviv**

(03) 6973653

Kaplan Hospital, Neve Or AIDS Center, **Rehovot**

(08) 9441915

Meir Hospital Outpatient Clinic, **Cfar Sava**

(09) 7472896

Rambam Hospital Outpatient Clinic, **Haifa**

(04) 8543452

Sheba Hospital Outpatient Clinic, **Tel HaShomer**

(03) 5304937

Levinsky Clinic, 5th Floor, Central Bus Station  
**Tel Aviv**

(03) 5373738

Soroka Hospital Outpatient Clinic, **Beer Sheva**

(08) 6244607

HaEmek Hospital Outpatient Clinic, **Afula**

(04) 6495447

Ziv Hospital, Outpatient Clinic, **Tzfat**

(04) 6828881

Barzilei Hospital, Outpatient Clinic, **Ashkelon**

(08) 6745207



Address

Telephone

**The Israel AIDS Task Force/Ministry  
of Health AIDS Hotline**

(03) 5613300

[www.aidsisrael.org.il](http://www.aidsisrael.org.il)

**Society for the Protection of Nature**

[www.teva.org.il](http://www.teva.org.il)



## Other Available Publications

The following booklets are available from the Publications Department. To order, simply indicate the booklets you wish to receive and return the order form to the Publications Department, English Section, Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, 15 Rehov Hillel, Jerusalem 94581. The publications will be mailed to you free of charge.

- Guide for the New Immigrant
- The Absorption Basket
- ConsumerFocus Magazine
- Employment
- Employment Guidance Centers
- Education
- First Steps
- Guarding Your Health in Israel
- Guide to Higher Education
- Guide to Services for the Disabled
- Guide to Transportation in Israel
- Guide to Ulpan Study
- Health Services in Israel
- Housing
- The Life Cycle in Israel
- Military Service
- National Insurance Institute
- Retirees
- Accountants
- Artists, Writers, and Athletes
- Computer and Hi-Tech Professionals
- Engineers and Architects
- Lawyers
- Medical Professionals
- Nurses
- Psychologists
- Scientists and Researchers
- Social Workers
- Teachers
- Where to Turn
- Assistance to Victims of Enemy Actions
- Registering for a Health Fund
- Information for Olim Newspaper
- Shiluv Magazine



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



*A moment of your time!*

In order to improve the level and usefulness of the material presented in this booklet, we would appreciate it if you would answer the following questions:

1. Where did you get the brochure "Guarding your Health?"  
 Airport  Ministry of Immigrant Absorption  Other  
(specify) \_\_\_\_\_
2. To what extent did this booklet provide you with the information that you needed?  
(1 is the lowest rating, 5 is the highest rating)    1 2 3 4 5  
Comments \_\_\_\_\_
3. Please rate the following areas from 1 to 5 (5 being the highest rating)  
 Clarity of the Text                                    1 2 3 4 5  
 Sufficiency of Details                                    1 2 3 4 5  
 Design of the Brochure                                    1 2 3 4 5  
 Usefulness of the Brochure                                    1 2 3 4 5

We would appreciate the following information for statistical purposes:

Profession \_\_\_\_\_ Gender M  F  Age \_\_\_\_\_  
Country of Origin \_\_\_\_\_ Year of Aliyah \_\_\_\_\_  
Place of Residence \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please send the completed questionnaire to the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, Publications Department, English Section, 15 Rehov Hillel, Jerusalem, 94581 or by fax to (02) 6241585.

You can also place this questionnaire in the public suggestions box at an office of the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption nearest you.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Best wishes for an easy and successful absorption!





