

Healthchecks

One of the most important things to do when back home is to arrange a thorough healthcheck. Many of us are exposed to germs and diseases we're not accustomed to while we're abroad, and it's good to check that nothing is seriously wrong.

First visit your doctor, and tell him you've been living abroad. You might as well get as many of the checks as you can courtesy of your state Health Department. If you're a UK citizen, you may find that your GP or hospital thinks you're not entitled to free treatment if you've been living abroad, but as a missions worker you are specifically exempted from the usual provisions. Find further details at www.dh.gov.uk/en/Healthcare/Entitlementsandcharges/OverseasVisitors/index.htm

There are also many specialist organisations which cater specifically for mission workers, such as Healthlink 360 (www.healthlink360.org) and Interhealth (www.interhealth.org.uk). Their services may not seem cheap, but they are extremely thorough and their staff are highly knowledgeable. They also provide debriefing and psychological checks, to make sure that you're not suffering adverse emotional effects of your time abroad.

Many people find that after a significant time abroad they are suffering from the physical effects of long-term stress. A full debrief is often the first step to recognising some of these issues. Follow up with an experienced church leader, mission rep or a qualified counsellor can help unpack some of the issues arising from such situations and is highly recommended. Some of the organisations that offer counselling can be found at www.oscar.org.uk/service/pastoral/counselling.htm

Syzygy offers a debriefing service to mission workers and you can talk to us about this by emailing info@syzygy.org.uk. We are also happy to put you in touch with counsellors whom we can recommend.