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A guide to coping with illness when abroad

Prevention is always better than cure, especially when you are in a foreign country. Here are some tips to help you stay safe and healthy



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Studying overseas is an exciting experience. You can have lots of fun and there are many things to see and explore. But the worst thing about studying overseas is getting sick in a foreign country. If, in future, you find yourself in this situation, here's some advice on how to cope.

Be prepared

There's an old saying that goes: "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." This means stopping something before it starts is better than fixing it when it's here. If you know you have a problem, such as asthma or allergies, make sure you have some medicine with you whenever you go out.

Understand the local medical system

Different countries have their own medical systems, not to mention having different ways of dealing with international students. If you're studying in the US or Britain, their system is more complicated than the one in Hong Kong. If you have a

local friend, ask them on what to do if you ever find yourself in a local hospital. If you don't, think about asking a senior student who has been here longer than you have.

In addition, it would be useful to have an idea about the best hospital, medical centre, and pharmacy in your area.

Carry a copy of your medical information

A lot of people panic about not being able to fully explain their condition to the doctor when they become sick in a foreign country. To avoid this, have your medical information, such as blood type, allergies and the medication you are taking, in your wallet. This will be very useful, especially if you have serious allergies, or if you are too sick to talk.

When you get sick

If you fall ill, depending on where you are, you may receive medical care which might be quite different from Hong Kong. While you should respect the knowledge of the doctors (they're the experts, after all), don't be afraid to speak up if you think there's a problem with the treatment you're being given, or anything else you're not comfortable with.

Don't call your family right away

Unless your parents are medical experts, don't call them as soon as you find out that you have, for example, a fever. There's not much they can do, since you are thousands of

kilometres away. Don't get me wrong - I am not saying that you should never tell your parents about you being sick, just that there's no reason to make them worry unnecessarily if you are only a little bit unwell. Rest and drink plenty of fluids, and you'll be up and about in no time.

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If it's a serious illness, do tell your parents immediately. You might need their advice and support on what to do, and they might feel sad you did not choose to tell them.

Of course, there's no way that you can ever be fully prepared against falling sick in a foreign country, but taking precautions will certainly help you cope with such situations better.



University students learn tricks of the trade at Canton Fair



The 124th Guangzhou Import and Export Fair, also known as the Canton Fair, is getting a lot of international attention.

The event, held twice a year, is the mainland's largest trade show, and ends on Sunday. It attracts thousands of exhibitors and buyers - both local and foreign - as well as local university students, who serve as interpreters or volunteers.

They work as interpreters at the fair for a daily wage of about 300 yuan (HK\$338). Their main task is to facilitate communication between foreign buyers and Chinese exhibitors. Zhong Meiqi, nicknamed Miki, is a student from

the School of Translation at Sun Yat-sen University. She found the job through a WeChat group and works for a couple from Zhejiang province who specialise in gardening businesses.

Before starting work, Miki had to become familiar with technical terms such as FOB (Free on Board) and MOQ (Minimum Order Quantity), and learn about the products. Sometimes she would make small mistakes, but she was not nervous at all.

"Accuracy comes first. If I don't know a specific word, I'll consult an e-dictionary and interpret," Miki said.

Her biggest challenge is the heavy workload. She works from 9am to 6pm every day, with no lunch break. But she says her job is very interesting. "Once a Middle East buyer, in fluent Chinese, asked me to tell him the story of Sun Yat-sen." Sun Yat-sen was the founding father of the Republic of China.

Volunteers, however, work in teams and are involved in organisation, logistics and publicity.

Lin Fang, a journalism student from Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, is a member of the publicity team. She walks around one of the halls every day, giving directions to visitors, taking photos



The Canton Fair is held twice a year. Photo: Xinhua

and writing press releases. Lin said two visitors from southeast Asia thanked her for telling them about the scenic spots and delicious food in Guangzhou. She said: "I've never

volunteered at such a grand exhibition, so I feel a little bit stressed, but it's rewarding."

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