

U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine

A SOLDIER'S GUIDE TO STAYING HEALTHY IN ESTONIA, LATVIA AND LITHUANIA

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INTRODUCTION

This country-specific guide should be used in conjunction with [GTA 08-05-062, Guide to Staying Healthy](#), and is intended to provide information that can help reduce your risk of Disease and Non-battle Injuries (DNBI) when deployed. This health threat and countermeasure information is based on the most current data available from U.S. Department of Defense medical agencies at the time of production. In addition to the information in this guide, you should also receive force health protection, health threat, and preventive medicine countermeasures training/briefings prior to and, as required, throughout the length of your deployment.

ESTONIA, LATVIA AND LITHUANIA OVERVIEW

[Estonia](#), [Latvia](#) and [Lithuania](#) are located in Eastern Europe, on the northeast border of Russia. All three countries were part of the former Soviet Union but regained their freedom in 1991 when the Soviet Union collapsed. *Estonia* is slightly larger than Tennessee and has 1,520 islands in the Baltic Sea. The land is mostly flat with some hills in the south. Estonia's average elevation is 50 meters (160 feet), with the highest peak, Mt. Munamagi, reaching an elevation of only 320 meters (1,050 feet). Estonia has more than 1,500 lakes and has coastline on the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Finland. These coastlines are mostly made of cliffs. Estonia's climate is humid and temperate with cool temperatures in the winter and warm temperatures in the summer. In February, the coldest month, the mean daily temperature throughout the country varies from -4° to +5° C (23° to 43° F). In July, the mean daily temperature varies from 16° to 17° C (61° to 63° F). Throughout Estonia, mean annual precipitation is 570 millimeters (23 inches). *Latvia* is slightly larger than West Virginia. It is also mostly flat with some hilly areas in the east. Latvia has coastline along the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Riga with steep cliffs and sandy beaches. Latvia has about 5,000 lakes and reservoirs, most of which are very shallow. Latvia is humid and cloudy during most of the year. Summers (June through August) generally are cool and rainy. The mean daily temperature in July, the warmest month, is 17° C (63° F). The mean daily temperature for January, the coldest month, is -2° C (28° F) along the coast and -7° C (19° F) in eastern and more inland areas. Average annual precipitation varies from 550 millimeters to 800 millimeters (22 to 31 inches). *Lithuania* is slightly bigger than West Virginia and mostly consists of low-lying plain and hilly uplands. In the southeast is the highest point in Lithuania which is approximately 300 meters (1,000 feet) elevation. Lithuania has a relatively short, sandy coastline along the Baltic Sea. It has about 3,000 lakes, mostly located in the east and southeast. Lithuania's climate is cool in the winter and warm in the summer. The mean daily temperature for January, the coldest month, is -5° C (23° F). July, the warmest month, has a mean daily temperature of 17° C (63° F). Levels of precipitation vary considerably from region to region. In the far west, mean annual precipitation is about 930 millimeters (37 inches); however, there is less rainfall inward at about 540 millimeters (22 inches) annually.

ESTONIA, LATVIA AND LITHUANIA RISK ASSESSMENT

Based on a combination of all major infectious diseases that occur in a country, [overall country risk level](#) is assigned. Countries can be rated as low, intermediate, high, or highest risk. All the countries in this region are INTERMEDIATE RISK for infectious diseases. All diseases are preventable when force health protection measures are followed.

Environmental contamination may also present short- and long- term health risks to personnel deployed to these countries.

The greatest short-term health risks are associated with consumption of water contaminated with raw sewage or runoff containing fecal pathogens, water contaminated with industrial waste, and agrochemicals.

The greatest long-term health risks are associated with air pollution, particularly in the largest population centers and near industrial complexes.

This guide discusses specific disease and environmental risks and ways to eliminate or lessen those risks.

VECTOR-BORNE DISEASES

DISEASE RISKS

[Tick-borne encephalitis \(TBE\)](#) is also known as spring-summer encephalitis. It is a very serious disease transmitted by bites of certain ticks. It can also be contracted by consuming unpasteurized dairy products from infected cows, goats, or sheep.

Diseases of intermediate risk that are caused by insect bites exist. These diseases include [California group viruses](#) and Sindbis (Ockelbo) virus from mosquitoes, and [Lyme disease](#) from ticks. There may be other diseases spread by various insects and ticks. Your local medical authority will determine if these diseases or other vector-borne diseases are a threat in your specific location and provide appropriate countermeasures.

PREVENTION

- When deployed to this region, use the [DOD Insect Repellent System](#) detailed in [GTA 08-05-062](#) to reduce your risk of acquiring a vector-borne disease.
- Wear [permethrin](#)-treated uniforms with trousers tucked into boots, sleeves rolled down, and undershirt tucked into trousers. Wear N-diethyl-meta-toluamide (DEET) on exposed skin.
- When deployed to this region, [sleep under a permethrin-treated bed net](#) to repel insects and further reduce risks of vector-borne diseases.
- When using both DEET and sunscreen products, apply sunscreen to the skin first. After 30 minutes to an hour, apply the DEET. This allows the sunscreen time to penetrate and bind to the skin first.

FOOD-BORNE AND WATER-BORNE DISEASES

DISEASE RISKS

[Diarrhea \(bacterial\)](#) is contracted when you eat contaminated food or drink contaminated water, ice or milk.

[Hepatitis A](#) is a food- or water-borne disease that can make you sick for a month or more. Hepatitis A is contracted when you eat contaminated food or drink contaminated water, ice, or milk.

In addition to bacterial diarrhea and hepatitis A, other diseases of intermediate risk to forces deployed to this region include [diarrhea \(protozoal\)](#), [hepatitis E](#), [tularemia](#) and [typhoid/paratyphoid fever](#). They are all acquired by consuming contaminated food, water, and dairy products.

PREVENTION

- Assume all non-approved food, ice, and water is contaminated. You should not drink local tap water, fountain drinks, or ice cubes. Do not eat any food or drink any water or a beverage (including bottled water) that has not been approved by the U.S. military as these may be contaminated. Even a one-time consumption of these foods or water may cause severe illness.

- Receiving the hepatitis A vaccine can eliminate the risk of contracting hepatitis A.
- See [GTA 08-05-062](#) for appropriate countermeasures.

WATER-CONTACT DISEASES AND SKIN INFECTIONS

DISEASE RISKS

Water-contact diseases are most often acquired by swimming or wading in contaminated water. The water-contact disease of intermediate risk is [leptospirosis](#) which is caused by bacteria. Skin irritations and infections, such as athlete's foot and ringworm, are also common medical threats during any deployment and are commonly caused by fungi that thrive in moist conditions.

PREVENTION

- Do not swim or wade in water that has not been treated with chlorine; if you must enter untreated water, wear protective clothing and footwear.
- Never go barefoot.
- Clean your skin and clothing after wading or swimming in freshwater ponds or streams.
- To prevent skin infections, maintain clean, dry skin.
- See [GTA 08-05-062](#) for additional countermeasure information.

ANIMAL-CONTACT DISEASES

DISEASE RISKS

Diseases contracted through contact with animals that are of intermediate military significance include [hantavirus](#) hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome (HFRS), [Q fever](#) and [rabies](#). They are serious illnesses that you contract from being bitten by an infected animal (rabies) or inhaling dust that contains the organisms that cause the disease (HFRS, Q fever). Cats, dogs and bats are the main carriers of rabies, but any animal can be infected with rabies. Livestock and other barnyard animals are the main carriers of Q fever, and rodents carry HFRS.

PREVENTION

- Avoid contact with all animals.
- If bitten, seek medical attention immediately.
- Keep living quarters free of rodents, and stay clear of buildings infested with rodents.
- Avoid breathing dust contaminated by rodent feces or urine.
- Always check dug-in fighting positions for potentially dangerous animals.
- Clean your skin and clothing after contact with animals or dust.
-

DANGEROUS ANIMALS AND PLANTS

RISKS

- Five species of venomous snakes, which are well camouflaged viper species, live in the region.
- Several species of centipedes and spiders, which can deliver painful bites, are present throughout the region.

- Some regional plants have thorns, stinging hairs, or toxic resins that may puncture the skin or introduce poison into the skin causing skin irritation, rashes or infections.
- Contact with the smoke from the burning of these plants can also cause skin rashes and damage to your lungs.
- Some regional plants may cause systemic poisoning if leaves, berries, flowers, or other plant parts are chewed or swallowed. Symptoms include dizziness, vomiting, irregular heartbeat, and delirium or hallucinations.

PREVENTION

- Consider any snake encountered as poisonous, and do not handle. Avoid contact with all wildlife.
- Seek immediate medical attention if bitten or stung by any animal or insect; untreated bites may cause serious illness or death within 1 hour.
- If possible, avoid sleeping on the ground.
- Shake out boots, bedding, and clothing prior to use, and never walk barefoot.
- Avoid skin contact with plants when possible.
- Clean your clothing with soap and water after contact with animals or harmful plants.

CONTAGIOUS AND SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

DISEASE RISKS

There is a risk of being exposed to the bacteria that causes [tuberculosis](#) (TB). Breathing in the bacteria that someone coughed or sneezed into the air spreads TB. Being exposed to the bacteria will cause a positive skin test even if you do not become sick. If you have a positive skin test, you may still be treated even if you have no symptoms. [Sexually transmitted diseases](#), such as [gonorrhea](#), [chlamydia](#), [human immunodeficiency virus \(HIV\)](#)/acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) and [hepatitis B](#), occur throughout the region. Though the immediate impact of HIV/AIDS and hepatitis B on an operation is limited, the long-term impact on your individual health is substantial.

PREVENTION

- There is a vaccine for hepatitis B but not for any other STD.
- **Anyone deployed to the region should not have unprotected sex and should not share needles.**
- Those deployed should see [GTA 08-05-062](#) for appropriate countermeasures.

HOT AND COLD WEATHER INJURIES

Temperature extremes in this region may impact military operations. Heat injuries are possible but unlikely. Heat injury is most likely to occur during the early phase of deployment; acclimatization is critical. Injuries due to cold weather are more likely. The coldest months of the year in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are December through March. Cold weather injuries are more likely to occur during these months. The effects of cold weather are more severe in high mountainous areas due to reduced oxygen and lower air pressure. Since the highest point in this area is only slightly higher than 1,000 meters, this is unlikely to be an issue. Check with your unit on the requirement for

packing the extended cold weather clothing system. See [GTA 08-05-062](#) for appropriate countermeasures.

TOXIC INDUSTRIAL CHEMICALS AND MATERIALS

When deployed, you may face health risks from industrial chemicals and materials as a result of activities by terrorists or warring parties; accidents related to improper design, maintenance, or operation of indigenous industrial facilities; inadvertent exposure to toxic waste materials in the environment or at abandoned pesticide storage sites; or improper handling or disposal of hazardous material with which our own forces deploy. The degree of health risks depends upon many factors. Consult your medical authority for additional information.

FIELD SANITATION TEAM

Each company-sized unit has a Field Sanitation Team (FST) whose members are trained (40-hour course) and fully equipped according to [AR 40-5](#), [FM 4-25.12](#), and [FORSCOM REG 700-2](#). Know who the members of your FST are, and know how they can assist in preventing medical threats to your health. Become familiar with FST equipment and training.

HEARING PROTECTION

It is essential that you use properly fitted [hearing protection](#) during military operations. Exposure to high-intensity noise may cause hearing loss. Good hearing is essential to mission success. If you are a dismounted soldier, the [Combat Arms Earplug](#) (NSN 6515-01-466-2710) will protect you from the impact noise of weapons fire while only slightly interfering with voice communications and detection of combat sounds such as vehicle noise, footfalls in leaves, and the closing of a rifle bolt. While not as effective as the Combat Arms Earplug in preserving your ability to hear important mission-related sounds, noise muffs or standard earplugs are very effective at preventing noise-induced injury. If you are a member of vehicle or helicopter crews, your combat vehicle crew or aircrew helmets have built-in hearing protectors.

ORAL HEALTH

[Dental disease](#) is a common problem during deployments because it is not easy to take care of your mouth. You should deploy with toothbrush, dental floss, and fluoride toothpaste. You should brush your teeth twice a day and floss your teeth once a day. This is the best way to prevent gum disease, trench mouth and tooth decay. In difficult tactical environments, teeth should be brushed at least once a day. Seek medical attention immediately at the onset of any dental problems. You are more vulnerable to other diseases when your mouth is not healthy.

PRE-DEPLOYMENT HEALTH INFORMATION

- [Complete the Pre-Deployment Health Assessment \(DD FORM 2795\)](#) to assess your state of health before deployment and to assist health care providers in identifying your medical needs and providing present and future medical care to you.
- You will not have access to your health care record during the deployment. The Adult Preventive and Chronic Care Flowsheet ([DD FORM 2766](#)) will be used as your deployment health record. This document will include information on all your immunizations, any medications you are currently taking, and any ongoing medical problems that you may have. When you go through readiness processing, ensure that all appropriate information is documented on your DD FORM 2766. When you return home, this information will be placed in your regular health record.

INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR HEALTH CARE WHILE DEPLOYED

- It is important that you know where to seek health care while deployed. This may or may not be through the same channels as your home station. Ask your chain of command for more information.
- While deployed, you must maintain your health and seek care whenever an illness or injury affects your work. Your unit is depending on you. It is always better to seek care early so your problems can be documented appropriately and taken care of immediately. When problems are caught early, they are usually easier to treat.

POST-DEPLOYMENT HEALTH INFORMATION

- [Complete the Post-Deployment Health Assessment \(DD FORM 2796\)](#) to assess your health after deployment and to assist health care providers in identifying your medical needs and providing present and future medical care to you.
- If you become sick after you return home, tell your doctor that you were deployed.
- Complete malaria medications as directed, and receive follow-on medical care/tests as directed.

Contact your Preventive Medicine or Medical Support Unit for more information.

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