

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

A SOLDIER'S GUIDE TO STAYING HEALTHY IN THE REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA

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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.

REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA OVERVIEW

The [Republic of Georgia](#), slightly larger than South Carolina, is strategically located east of the Black Sea in southwestern Asia, allowing for control of much of the routes through the Caucasus Mountains. In the north, the Greater Caucasus Mountains consist of a series of mountain belts, separated by deep gorges. In the south, the Lesser Caucasus Mountains consist of a less rugged series of plateaus and peaks with a maximum elevation of 10,380 feet. The central lowlands extend between the Caucasus Mountains from the eastern border to the Black Sea. The lowlands near the Black Sea form a rich agricultural region, which was reclaimed from swampland by a series of canals and river embankments that allow drainage. There are 192 miles of coastline. The remainder of the land is woodland. The borders of Georgia include Azerbaijan in the east, Armenia and Turkey in the south, the Black Sea in the west, and Russia in the north. The elevation ranges from sea level along the Black Sea to 16,562 feet in the Greater Caucasus Mountains. Georgia's climate is subtropical along the Black Sea coast and subarctic in permanently snow-covered mountain areas. Along the Black Sea coast and adjacent plains, the average daily temperature is 42° F during January and 73° F in July. In eastern Georgia, the average daily temperature is 32° F in January and 77° F in July. In western Georgia, annual rainfall varies from 40 to 80 inches, with most rain falling during autumn and winter. In eastern Georgia, annual rainfall varies from 16 to 28 inches in the foothills to twice this amount in the mountains. Mountainous areas are prone to earthquakes and landslides.

REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA RISK ASSESSMENT

Based on a combination of all major infectious diseases that occur in a country, an [overall country risk level](#) is assigned as low, intermediate, high, or highest risk. Georgia is INTERMEDIATE RISK for infectious diseases. Diseases of military importance to forces deployed to Georgia include [hepatitis A and E](#), [typhoid fever](#), [brucellosis](#), and several diarrheal diseases to include [cholera](#), all acquired by consuming contaminated food, water, and dairy products; vector-borne diseases such as [Boutonneuse fever](#) (Mediterranean spotted fever), [Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever](#), [leishmaniasis](#), [louse-borne typhus](#), [Lyme disease](#), [malaria](#), [plague](#), [sandfly fever](#), [Sindbis virus](#), [Tahyna virus](#), [tick-borne encephalitis](#), and [West Nile fever](#), which are acquired through the bites of insects or ticks; [leptospirosis](#) from swimming, wading, or other skin contact with contaminated water; [rabies](#) from animal contact; [meningococcal meningitis](#) and [tuberculosis](#) from contact with human respiratory secretions or droplets; [hantavirus hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome](#) from inhaling dust contaminated with rodent urine or excrement; and [sexually transmitted diseases](#). Environmental factors also pose a significant health risk to deployed forces and include sewage, agricultural, and industrial contamination of water and food supplies; and localized air and soil pollution. Additionally, high altitude illnesses and cold injury are a potentially significant DNBI in the mountainous regions.

INCREASED REGIONAL DISEASE THREATS

As recently as December 2001, numerous hazardous sources of ionizing radiation have been discovered in areas formerly occupied by Russian forces and abandoned following the collapse of the former Soviet Union. Many of these hazardous radioactive materials may be buried. Additionally, abandoned military bases may have severe soil contamination from aircraft/vehicle fuels, solvents, and other harmful chemicals. Request an environmental assessment from your supporting preventive medicine unit prior to establishing base camps or digging fighting/defensive positions.

The Republic of Georgia was contaminated with radioactive materials as a result of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant explosion. Due to the long half-life of cesium and strontium, food and water could be contaminated.

Hantavirus hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome is an elevated disease threat that occurs year-round, primarily in rural and semirural areas. Hantavirus infection can result from the inhalation of aerosolized dust from soil or other debris that has been contaminated with infected rodent urine or feces.

FIELD SANITATION TEAM

Each company-sized unit has a Field Sanitation Team (FST) whose members are trained (40-hour course) and fully equipped IAW [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.

FOOD-BORNE AND WATER-BORNE DISEASES

The diseases of greatest risk throughout the region, in both rural and urban areas, are bacterial diarrhea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever associated with contaminated food, water, and/or ice. Do not consume any food, water, or beverages (to include bottled water) that have not been approved by the U.S. military. Assume all non-approved food, ice, and water is contaminated. Water and food items available in this region, including dairy products, fish, fruits, and vegetables, may contain unsafe levels of pesticides, chemical fertilizers, bacteria, viruses, and radiological contamination. Contamination with human or animal waste is widespread. Even a one-time consumption of these foods or water may cause severe illness. See [GTA 08-05-062](#) for appropriate countermeasures.

VECTOR-BORNE DISEASES

Several vector-borne diseases are present throughout this region. These diseases are widespread but more common in rural areas during the warmer months of April through October, except for louse-borne typhus, which can occur year-round. They include Boutonneuse fever, Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever, Lyme disease, and tick-borne encephalitis from ticks; leishmaniasis and sandfly fever from sand flies; malaria, Sindbis

virus, Tahyna virus and West Nile fever from mosquitoes; plague from fleas; and louse-borne typhus from lice. Malaria occurs seasonally from April to October and is limited to the extreme southeast and the coastal areas of the Black Sea. Many other diseases are spread by the bites of mosquitoes, ticks, lice, sand flies, and fleas. 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.

- Take your malaria prevention pills when directed to do so. This is CRITICAL. Usually, you will begin taking medication prior to arriving in the area, while in the area, and after returning home.
- 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 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. Many insects in this region feed during the night, including mosquitoes that transmit malaria.
- When using both DEET and sunscreen products, apply sunscreen to the skin first so it does not interfere with the effectiveness of the DEET. After 30 minutes to an hour, apply the DEET. This allows the sunscreen to penetrate and bind to the skin first.

HOT AND COLD WEATHER INJURIES

Temperature extremes in this region may impact military operations. Heat injuries are possible during the summer months, especially in individuals not acclimatized to warmer temperatures. Cold injuries are the more serious threat in this region with the effects of cold weather being more severe in high mountainous areas due to reduced oxygen and lower air pressure. When deploying to this region, check with your unit on the requirement for packing the extended cold weather clothing system. See [GTA 08-05-062](#) for appropriate countermeasures.

HIGH ELEVATIONS

High altitude illnesses can kill. Military operations occurring at elevations over 6,000 feet can seriously impact unit and individual effectiveness. Serious illness or death can result if you ascend rapidly without allowing for acclimatization. Remain well hydrated; individual water requirements are greater at higher altitudes.

- When deployed to high mountain areas, be observant of the common symptoms of mountain sickness: headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, fatigue, irritability, and coughing. Seek medical attention immediately if you experience any of these symptoms.
- Pyridostigmine bromide tablets may increase the chance of dizziness or fainting during the first 24 hours at high altitude if you are not acclimatized.
- Lower oxygen levels at high altitudes (“thin air”) combined with the heavier work requirements when wearing mission-oriented protective posture (MOPP) gear can increase your risk of high altitude illnesses. When wearing MOPP gear at higher altitudes, you may require more time and concentration to perform assigned tasks.

- For appropriate countermeasures during high altitude operations, see [GTA 08-05-062](#) and [GTA 08-05-060, A Soldier's Guide to Staying Healthy at High Elevations](#).

HAZARDOUS ANIMALS AND PLANTS

- Several species of highly poisonous snakes, which are well camouflaged and very aggressive, live in the region. Consider any snake encountered as poisonous, and do not handle. Seek immediate medical attention if bitten; untreated snakebites may cause serious illness or death within 1 hour.
- Several species of scorpions and spiders, some with potentially fatal venom, are present throughout the region. If possible, avoid sleeping on the ground. Shake out boots, bedding, and clothing prior to use, and never walk barefoot. If bitten or stung, seek medical attention immediately.
- One caterpillar species with irritant hairs is present in the region. Contact with the irritant hairs can be very painful.
- 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. Avoid skin contact with plants when tactically feasible.
- Contact with the smoke from the burning of these plants can also cause skin rashes and damage to your lungs.
- Clean your clothing after contact with harmful plants. Decontaminate clothing by washing with soap and water.
- 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.

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

[Sexually transmitted diseases](#) are highly prevalent in this region. Gonorrhea, chlamydia, and other infections are common, and may affect a high percentage of personnel who have sexual contact. Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and hepatitis B occur throughout the region. Though the immediate impact of HIV and hepatitis B on an operation is limited, the long-term impact on your individual health is substantial. See [GTA 08-05-062](#) for appropriate countermeasures.

HEARING PROTECTION

It is essential that you use properly fitted hearing protection during military operations. Exposure to high-intensity noise may cause hearing loss that can adversely affect your combat effectiveness and individual readiness. 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 in 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 due to the challenge of maintaining good oral hygiene. You should deploy with toothbrush, dental floss, and fluoride toothpaste. Daily flossing and twice daily brushing of teeth is the best way to ensure prevention of periodontal disease and to decrease your risk of problems such as 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.

SKIN DISEASES

Skin irritations and infections, such as athlete's foot and ringworm, are common medical threats during any deployment and are commonly caused by fungi. The best prevention is to maintain clean, dry skin. See [GTA 08-05-062](#) for additional countermeasure information.

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 improper handling or disposal of hazardous material with which our own forces deploy. The degree of health risks depends upon many parameters. Consult your medical authority for additional information.

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 threatens your ability to complete your tasks. Your unit is depending on you. It is always better to seek care early so that your problems can be documented appropriately and taken care of immediately.

POST-DEPLOYMENT HEALTH INFORMATION

- [Complete the Post-Deployment Health Assessment \(DD FORM 2796\)](#) to assess your state of 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 physician 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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