

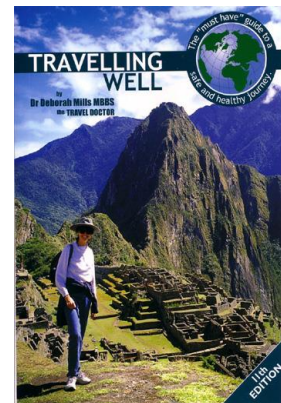
## WOMEN ON KOKODA

Women genetically will experience different physical and psychological change, therefore we provide you with the following information that we hope assists you with your preparation for an adventure experience. If you have any questions or concerns please contact our office on +617 5641 4561 or email [info@ourspirit.com.au](mailto:info@ourspirit.com.au)

### **Some Women's' Health Considerations for Kokoda Trekking**

Excerpts from 'Travelling Well' Dr Deborah Mills

- Thrush
- Cystitis / Urinary Tract Infection
- Feminine Hygiene
- Stopping periods
- Other issues with the contraceptive pill
- Irregular periods
- Hair loss during or shortly after travel
- Packing list for women



### **Thrush**

Thrush is a most unpleasant condition to have while traveling! Doxycycline is the common anti-malarial medication used for this part of the world and about 9% of women taking doxycycline will develop thrush. Cotton underclothes may help prevent it but you need to carry medicines so you can treat thrush promptly if symptoms develop.

### **Symptoms**

Thrush is a yeast infection of the vagina. The symptoms are:

- A white 'cheesy' vaginal discharge
- Redness/irritation of the genital skin
- Itch - sometimes quite severe.

Thrush is often provoked by the contraceptive pill, a course of antibiotics, or some types of malaria pills.

### **Treatment of thrush**

Thrush is easily treated with special creams or pessaries (e.g. econazole nitrate pessaries - one is placed into the vagina each night for 3 nights). Other popular treatments are Canesten, Gyno-Daktarin, nystatin, or miconazole. If the symptoms do not respond to treatment in a day or two, you must see a doctor urgently as it is probably not thrush. There is also an oral tablet available for severe cases; fluconazole, (Diflucan) one oral dose of 150mg is taken. As one traveller put it '*expensive but worth it*'

## Cystitis/Urinary Tract Infections

Many women experience cystitis or urinary tract infections when traveling. If you are prone to this type of infection, ensure you drink plenty of fluids, and treat yourself promptly if symptoms develop.

Infection of the urinary tract usually occurs in women. If you cannot see a doctor - Take your temperature and look at the urine.

### **Symptoms of Cystitis / Urinary Tract Infection**

- Burning or stinging when passing urine
- Feel *unable* to fully empty the bladder
- Need to go to the toilet very frequently e.g. every half an hour
- Urine is cloudy, discoloured and odour is increased

### **Treatment**

- Drink more fluids to 'flush' the germs out of the 'plumbing'.
- Decrease your coffee intake. Coffee is a kidney stimulant and will make you want to urinate more often.
- A urinary alkaliniser (e.g. Citravescent or Ural) may help stop the 'burning'. Take one sachet four times a day.
- Sometimes it is necessary to take antibiotics to clear the infection. If you cannot get to a doctor the appropriate antibiotics for urinary tract infections are trimethoprim, cotrimoxazole or norfloxacin (Noroxin is handy because you usually have it in your kit for TD).

#### **Norfloxacin (Noroxin) 400mg tablets**

One tablet twice a day for 3 days

If there is no improvement in 24 hours, you need to see a doctor. Bladder infections may spread upwards to the kidneys, which can be very serious.

## Kidney Infections

Watch for the bladder infection spreading to the kidneys. Clues for this are:

- Do you have a fever as well?
- Is there blood in your urine?
- Do you have back pain?
- Do you feel sick and tired?

These symptoms raise the definite possibility of kidney infection or Pyelonephritis. You need antibiotics and must see a doctor at once.

## Feminine Hygiene

Toilet and general washing facilities may be limited. During a menstrual period, ensure your hands are clean before tampons are used. Wash hands with soap and water, (tap water is OK), and dry your hands with a clean towel. Products such as Microshield™ hand wash can be used where soap and water is not available. The use of tampon applicators may be convenient. Stopping your periods for the duration of the walk may be a very good idea – see below.

## Stopping Periods

Medical research has shown that you do not NEED to have a period every month. If you are on the pill, some contraceptive pills can be taken continuously, thus avoiding periods altogether. This is safe. It is easier with monophasic (one strength pills) like Microgynon, Levlén, or Nordette. You simply skip the sugar pills for that month. This will delay your period 3 weeks. Most women can safely skip three periods in a row.

If you are taking 'multiple dose pills' (e.g. Triquilar, Triphasil, Trifeme), skipping the sugar pills may not work. To delay a period on these pills you need to do this: when you reach the end of your active pills for the month - instead of taking the sugar pills, use a spare packet and take the last week of active pills from the spare packet. Then take the sugar pills. This will delay your period for a week. Generally it is best to always take a 'Saturday' pill on a Saturday or confusion may occur. Discuss this with your doctor. If you want to skip periods, it may be easier to temporarily change to a 'one strength pill'.

## Other Issues with the Contraceptive Pill

### Vomiting ....and the Pill

If you are ill, and vomit within five hours of taking the pill, it may not have been absorbed. You should take another pill to replace the one lost. Use a spare packet; it is better to use a replacement pill for the correct day of the week, i.e. take a Thursday pill on a Thursday.

### Diarrhoea ....and the Pill

It is difficult to predict the effect that diarrhoea will have on pill absorption. The safest course of action is to continue taking the pill, but use other means of contraception while you have severe diarrhoea and until 7 active pills after the diarrhoea has ceased.

### Antibiotics ....and the Pill

This is important if you need to take antibiotics for diarrhoea, or with some of the ant malarial tablets. Some antibiotics interfere with the effectiveness of the contraceptive pill. This may lead to spotting in the middle of the month, or even pregnancy. For most antibiotics, use other means of contraception while taking the antibiotic and for 7 active contraceptive pills afterwards.

### Malaria tablets ...and the Pill

Doxycycline, a commonly used anti malarial for this region, may interfere with the 'pill' leading to irregular bleeding or even pregnancy. Chloroquine, Maloprim, Malarone and mefloquine (Lariam) do not interfere with the oral contraceptive pill. Use other means of contraception while on doxycycline and for at least 7 active contraceptive pills after finishing the malaria pills.

## Irregular Periods

If you are not on the pill, it is common to have irregular periods while traveling, especially on this sort of trip. Your periods may come early or come late – be prepared. It is harmless except for the logistics of dealing with sanitary protection, and perhaps the concern of possible pregnancy if they are very late.

### Hair Loss During or Shortly After Travel

This is not a specifically female problem but tends to be more noticeable and cause more concern in women. It is quite common after prolonged or stressful travel to notice an increase in the loss of hair on brushes or on the pillow after sleeping. The hair does grow back. Have a checkup when you get home just in case it is something else.

### Additional Packing Items for Women

	Thrush medicine – pessaries and cream
	Extra supplies of tampons/sanitary protection
	Noroxin & Ural – in case of urinary tract/bladder infection
	Extra supplies of the contraceptive pill if relevant



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