**Preparing for Spring Break Vacations**

Easter comes earlier than usual this year – March 27 – and that means Spring Break vacations are just around the corner. If you’re planning a trip, it’s not too early to compile a travel checklist.

A doctor’s visit may not be the first thing that comes to mind before you go on vacation but the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises people to see their health-care provider four to six weeks before a trip abroad, to get any vaccines or medicine they may need. The CDC also has lots of helpful information for travelers on its website, cdc.gov.

With the end of winter, many travelers will be seeking out tropical climates, and those require special precautions.

Make sure you bring a hat that shades your face, ears and neck, along with a good pair of sunglasses, plenty of sunscreen to protect your skin and insect repellent to ward off mosquitoes. The CDC recommends sunglasses and sunscreen that block both UVA and UVB rays and sunscreen with an SPF 15 or higher. (Apply sunscreen first, then insect repellent and be sure to reapply sunscreen every couple of hours, as well as whenever you get out of the water.) It’s also important to drink plenty of fluids and not overdo it in the sun, especially during the middle of the day.

If you’re flying to your destination, remember the Transportation Security Administration’s 3-1-1 rule: travelers can put liquids, gels and aerosols in their carry-on bags but they must be 3.4 ounces or less, stored in a one-quart zip-top bag, and each flyer is allowed one zip-top bag. Anything larger should be placed in your checked baggage.

Whenever and wherever you travel, it’s important to let your financial institutions and credit card companies know that you’ll be away from home and incurring charges in different places than usual. This is particularly important for any international travel, including to neighboring countries. The last thing you want while on vacation is to have your credit card turned down when you’re trying to buy something or pay for a meal, or be unable to get cash from an ATM.

Also don’t forget that if you’re traveling anywhere outside the United States to make sure that you’ve notified your cell phone company. Most offer plans that extend coverage beyond the border, but you’ll need to make those arrangements before you leave home.

To make the best use of your time once you reach your destination, it pays to do some research in advance. Think about where you’ll be going and what you can reasonably see and do in a short amount of time as well as what kinds of activities you might enjoy trying, whether they’re old favorites or something new.

For example, if there’s an attraction you’re planning to see or a restaurant you’d like to try, consider buying tickets or making a reservation in advance, if possible. That way you’ll spend less of your precious vacation time waiting in line and lessen the risk of walking away disappointed.

For help planning a spring vacation, contact your travel agent.