

HILLSIDE HEALTH CARE INTERNATIONAL

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Below is a list of answers to some of the more common questions Hillside has received. Please understand that the list of questions is by no means complete and we try our best to provide you with the most accurate information. If you are still not sure about something, please email the question to the Director of Student and Volunteer Outreach, Kristine Gingerich at studentsandvolunteers@hillsidebelize.org.

Why is my payment not going through?

Many times your payment will be declined or will not let you try again because of “duplicate payments.” Most times this is due to your bank or issuing credit card company having declined the charge. The charge may be declined because you have a daily limit and the payment exceeds your daily purchasing limit. Another reason the charge may be declined is because the charge is not normal and your bank or issuing credit card company thinks it is a fraudulent charge. The easiest remedy is to contact your bank or credit card company and inform them about the payment.

What vaccinations do I need?

After looking at the World Health Organization, U.S.A. Government Health, U.K. Government Health, Canadian Government Health, and Australian Government Health websites, the following information is recommended by all sites. As Hillside Health Care International is based in the United States, the information comes from the Center for Disease Control or CDC. If you are not American and you have doubts please visit your countries Health Department websites.

The CDC (and all the other health organizations) recommends that all travelers be caught up on routine vaccinations. Specifically, measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine, poliovirus vaccine, etc. Check with your doctor to see what shots you may need. The recommendation from the CDC is to meet with your doctor or health department 4-6 weeks before coming to see us. However, if you know you are coming to see us and you just don't know when, then start the shots now.

In addition to the routine vaccinations, the CDC recommends that travelers have their Hepatitis A and Typhoid. The UK Government advises only Hepatitis A and asks UK citizens to consider Hepatitis B and Typhoid vaccinations. The Hepatitis A and B vaccines can be given in a combination shot. The Hepatitis shots are usually a series of 2 or 3 shots so the earlier you get started the better.

Our students & volunteers spend time hiking and being outdoors and in rural villages, potentially around animals. Please refer to the CDC site for advice on rabies vaccination. It is your choice to get vaccinated for rabies but most of Hillside's long term volunteers choose not to get vaccinated for rabies. The CDC website advises rabies vaccinations for some groups of people. Treatment is available in Belize should you contract rabies.

The Yellow Fever vaccine is not necessary unless you are traveling before arriving in Belize. In that case, you might be required to show proof of vaccination for Yellow Fever. This mainly applies to travelers coming from South American or African countries. If you are departing from North America, Europe, Australia, or New

Zealand, Yellow Fever vaccines are not required. Here is more information on the CDC and World Health Organization web pages linked below.

Most long-term volunteers at Hillside do not take any malaria prophylaxis. The government does a great job monitoring malaria and has an effective vector control program. In the past there were a large number of malaria cases in Belize; however due to a large public health initiative there were only 19 cases in 2014 and no reported cases in the Toledo district in 2015. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) reports Belize has had zero reported cases of Malaria since 2019. Our recommendation if you don't take malaria prophylaxis is to monitor your health. If you feel sick while at the clinic and have a temperature, go to the medical director or medical preceptors and they can treat you. It is up to you whether or not to take malaria prophylaxis.

USA: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/belize.htm>

UK: <http://immunisation.dh.gov.uk/category/key-vaccine-info/>

Canada: <http://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/vaccines>

Australia: www.smarttraveller.gov.au

World Health Organization: <http://www.who.int/ith/vaccines/en/>

How do I get to Hillside?

The students will fly from any of their international airports to Belize City International Airport. From Belize City, the students will have a choice of how to get to the clinic.

1. If you plan to travel by air from Belize City to Punta Gorda, the closest town with an airport, it is both the fastest and most expensive way (about US\$150 one-way or US\$270 round-trip), book with [Tropic Air](#) and use the discount code: **HillsidePG for a 10% discount on your ticket.** ([Maya Island Air](#) is not currently flying to Punta Gorda). Hillside does not endorse either airline; both are good.

When you arrive in Punta Gorda we will pick you up at the local airport. **We can only arrange transportation if we have detailed information - airline, expected arrival time etc. Please send arrival information no later than 15 days prior to arrival to liaisonmanager@hillsidebelize.org**

2. If you plan to take a bus from Belize City to the clinic, you will first need to take a shuttle or a taxi (approximate cost of \$30 - \$40 USD) from the airport (about 9 miles from the city) to get to the James Bus Terminal which is in the city. The bus schedule can be found at the [James Bus Schedule](#). Take one of the James Buses to Punta Gorda (they are distinctly orange with green trim) and inform the driver that you will be stopping off at Hillside in Eldridgeville. The bus fare is approximately \$30 BZD and US or BZD currency is accepted.

The ride down is anywhere from 5 to 6.5 hours depending on whether or not you get an express bus. Get off at the Eldridgeville bus stop (ask the conductor to point it out) - you'll see signs for Hillside Clinic. Poppyshow Road is perpendicular to the highway at the bus stop. Walk down the dirt road for a few minutes and the clinic will be on your left – you can't miss it.

Do I need proof of onward travel?

Yes, the Country of Belize requires proof of onward travel. This means you must have some sort of reservation that shows you do not intend on staying indefinitely in Belize. You may not be asked to show the

documentation upon entry into Belize but make sure you have something in place (airline ticket, bus ticket, etc.) to show a government official if you are asked.

Where will students be living?

Students live in a dorm on the Hillside clinic campus known as Abby's House. Hillside is located in Eldridgeville, approximately 6 miles outside of Punta Gorda. The dorm is a lovely, modern facility with a large communal sitting room, kitchen, communal showers, toilets, and washing machine. Students share bedrooms, usually 2 students to a room. There are screens on the windows and doors and fans (both ceiling and floor models) to help keep you cool. The dorm also has a TV (no cable) with a DVD player. There are many DVDs that have been purchased or donated but feel free to bring your own. You may hook the DVD player up to your laptop if you have movies to watch. The dorm does have internet access although the bandwidth is slow. We ask that you do not download too much - especially during office hours - as it will make everyone else's connection slow. The internet is too slow to stream movies.

When can I stay at Hillside?

Your room at Hillside will be available for you by 12pm the **Saturday** before your rotation begins until the **Saturday morning (8 am)** following the end of your rotation. Hillside provides transportation from Punta Gorda airstrip to Hillside Clinic on Saturdays at the start of the rotation or on Sundays when the Rotation starts on a national holiday. **THERE WILL BE A GENERAL ORIENTATION ON SUNDAY EVENING AT 5PM SO YOU MUST ARRIVE BEFORE THEN. YOUR ATTENDANCE AT THIS ORIENTATION IS MANDATORY. ORIENTATION WILL BE ON MONDAYS WHEN THE ROTATION STARTS ON A NATIONAL HOLIDAY.**

Is there internet access at Hillside?

Hillside has wireless internet! It is noticeably slower when using high volume streaming applications (Skype), so the use of these applications should occur after 4pm to allow for employees to be able to conduct routine business during the day. The internet also may be more subject to the elements than what you are used to, so please bear with us if there are interruptions in the connection. Also internet access is available at several locations in Punta Gorda.

What kind of electrical outlets are there in Belize?

Belize uses 110 volt, 60 cycle electricity, same as the United States. Plugs on the Hillside campus are the 2 and 3 pronged flat-type so U.S. travelers will not need a converter or adaptor. Other international travelers may need to bring converters when bringing electronics to Belize.

What about meals?

Hillside will provide students with transportation to go into Punta Gorda to shop at the market and grocery stores when they first arrive. Hillside will also transport students to Punta Gorda for shopping early on Monday and Wednesday mornings. Many students choose to shop together and cook meals communally. When students have free time, they may choose to go into town by bicycle, bus, or taxi.

Some lunches are provided during the rotation (mainly Fridays). Students need to provide their own lunch on remaining days. They can prepare their own lunch at Abby's House and bring it or they can buy lunch in town or by nearby vendors (Ms. Janice who lives next door will make burritos if you plan ahead) in Eldridgeville. Most lunches can be bought (\$8 to \$12 BZD) in Punta Gorda, but villages outside Punta Gorda do not always have somewhere to purchase lunch.

How does transportation work?

Hillside provides transportation from the Punta Gorda airport or from the bus terminal when students arrive the Saturday prior to a rotation beginning. If you have made special arrangements for arrival and Hillside is not doing student pickups, they will arrange for a taxi to pick you up. Students are transported by Hillside vehicles to all mobile clinics and educational activities, as well as into Punta Gorda for market days on Monday and Wednesday mornings. There are bicycles for students to use as well. Buses regularly run from Eldridgeville to Punta Gorda and there are taxis. Students should use the bus system or make other transportation arrangements for their weekend plans. Do not hitchhike.

What should I wear?

Most students wear scrubs at clinics. You may bring your own and Hillside has some scrubs available for student use while they are at the clinic. When representing Hillside, whether at clinic, mobiles, community health activities, or educational activities, you must dress appropriately. This means no tank tops, revealing dresses or tops, or very short shorts or skirts for women and appropriate shirts/shorts/pants for men (no bathing suits at clinics or community activities). The weather is usually very humid so make sure the fabric is breathable. It does not hurt to bring one or two business casual outfits for either community projects (PT students need at least one outfit) or just a night on the town. The Toledo District of Belize is mostly rainforest, so prepare for rain. The weather can change very fast so you need to be prepared. The old town adage is if you don't like the rain, wait a few minutes and the sun usually reappears. Ponchos, rain jackets, umbrellas are all good ideas but keep in mind, the more you pack the more you have to carry.

What should I bring?

Hillside provides towels, sheets, pillows, as well as a fully equipped kitchen. You should bring bug spray, sunscreen, and personal toiletries. While these are available in town, they are usually more expensive than at home. You do not need to bring mosquito netting as there are screens in the dorms. There is internet access but again, if you are planning on having reference materials on your smartphone or laptop, try to download them prior to coming. Also, non-internet based reference materials work best. There are medical books and resources at the clinic but feel free to bring your own if you have favorites. There is limited leisure reading available at the clinic or in town but we do have a small book shelf with about 4 shelves of books that you may borrow. Feel free to add to the books as well. You should bring your own stethoscope if you have one, though the clinic does have extras. Pens and a penlight are always helpful. A head light would be a very good idea to bring if you have one. It does not have to be an expensive one but it would be useful on evening trips. A lot of students take weekend trips in and around Belize. It is a good idea to have a smaller, duffle style bag for your weekend trips. It will be easier to carry than a larger suitcase. Refer to the Student Orientation Manual for more detailed information about what to bring for your clinical rotation.

This is a general list that has some stuff mentioned before but being in list form might help you. It is by no

means a complete list but it should help you start thinking about what else to bring.

- **2 rapid COVID 19 tests** - can be donated when you leave if not used
- 3+ sets of scrubs to wear for patient care. We do have a scrub lending wardrobe if you do not have your own.
- Favorite snacks or brand of coffee or tea you must have.
- Cash (no \$1 USD bills as no one wants them here, otherwise you can use USD to make purchases)
- Passport
- Toiletries
- Hand sanitizer
- **Masks (surgical or N95) to wear in clinic/patient contact**
- Backpack
- Tennis shoes that you don't mind getting muddy
- Sunscreen
- Water/hiking shoes
- **Sturdy water bottle**
- **Any medicine you take regularly, and any OTC meds you might need**
- Short sleeve shirts rather than sleeveless are required for clinic related activities
- One nice (but not formal) outfit for a dinner out
- Swimsuit
- Sunglasses
- Laptop/tablet/smartphone
- Bug Spray
- Small Headlamp
- Rain poncho/coat (if desired)

What does a typical week look like?

Medical Students are divided for the month into 2 teams. Pharmacy students rotate between teams. Rehab students work with the medical students but are not necessarily part of a team. The medical teams are more to divide the medical students for the mobiles and the presentations they will be making during their rotation. Public health students mainly work with the Public Health Director on independent projects/ongoing programs.

Each day one team stays at the Eldridgeville clinic and one team goes out on a mobile clinic to a village on a rotating basis. Pharmacy students rotate as well but they also work in the polyclinic pharmacy, in Punta Gorda, with the hospital pharmacists. There are educational/cultural activities several afternoons a week. During the month, each team of students does one or more presentations for the other team on topics such as dermatology, international and global health issues, hypertension, diabetes, and case presentations. Students are also expected to do community health presentations for local villages. Time and materials are provided during the rotation for working on the presentations. In addition, students are given an opportunity to observe other health care organizations in the area and make home visits with Hillside's nursing staff.

The student day can start as early as 6:30 a.m. and last until 5:00 – 6:00 p.m. Most days, the student will be finished by 5:00 p.m., if not a little earlier. The students work Monday through Friday. We finish by 3pm on

Fridays so students can fit in weekend excursions or activities.
You will be instructed in more detail on all this during orientations once you are at Hillside.

What are the clinical students' responsibilities at Hillside?

Clinical students at Hillside provide direct patient care and therefore are expected to have the knowledge base and clinical experience to do so. Students are expected to see patients, do a history and physical and formulate an appropriate treatment plan. The student presents the patient's condition to a licensed preceptor who is responsible for supervising students and patient care. Students are also encouraged to consider differential diagnosis and management plans when seeing patients. Students document all patient encounters in charts. Hillside uses a SOAP note structure in charts, an example of which can be found in the Student Orientation Manual. When appropriate, students in the Medicine Program may also perform or assist with simple procedures, such as suturing, pelvic exams, simple incisions and drainage, etc. Common conditions seen at clinics include scabies, impetigo, cellulitis and abscesses, asthma, URI, abdominal pain, injuries, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and stroke as well as occasionally more exotic conditions such as leishmaniasis, Dengue fever, scorpion bites and machete injuries. The Student Orientation Manual contains specific program information.

What is the preceptor's role at Hillside?

Please understand that although you are a student, you will be expected to recommend almost all the decisions regarding your patients. Many students come into the rotation doubting their clinical abilities and leave as very confident medical providers, thanks in part to our preceptors. The preceptors are present to make sure any decision is the correct one. The preceptor is also there to challenge your diagnosis and treatment plan. Not because you might be wrong but to ensure you know what you are talking about and ensure their confidence in your decisions. The preceptors will challenge you to think for yourself and only direct you to where the answer exists if you don't know.

Please note: Hillside is a student based and supported organization and cannot run without students. Students provide patient care and student fees provide the majority of funding for the clinic: paying for staff salaries; providing for upkeep of the clinic, dorm and vehicles; purchasing medications and supplies; as well as covering students' room and board.

For more information please see the Hillside website at: <http://www.hillsidebelize.org>