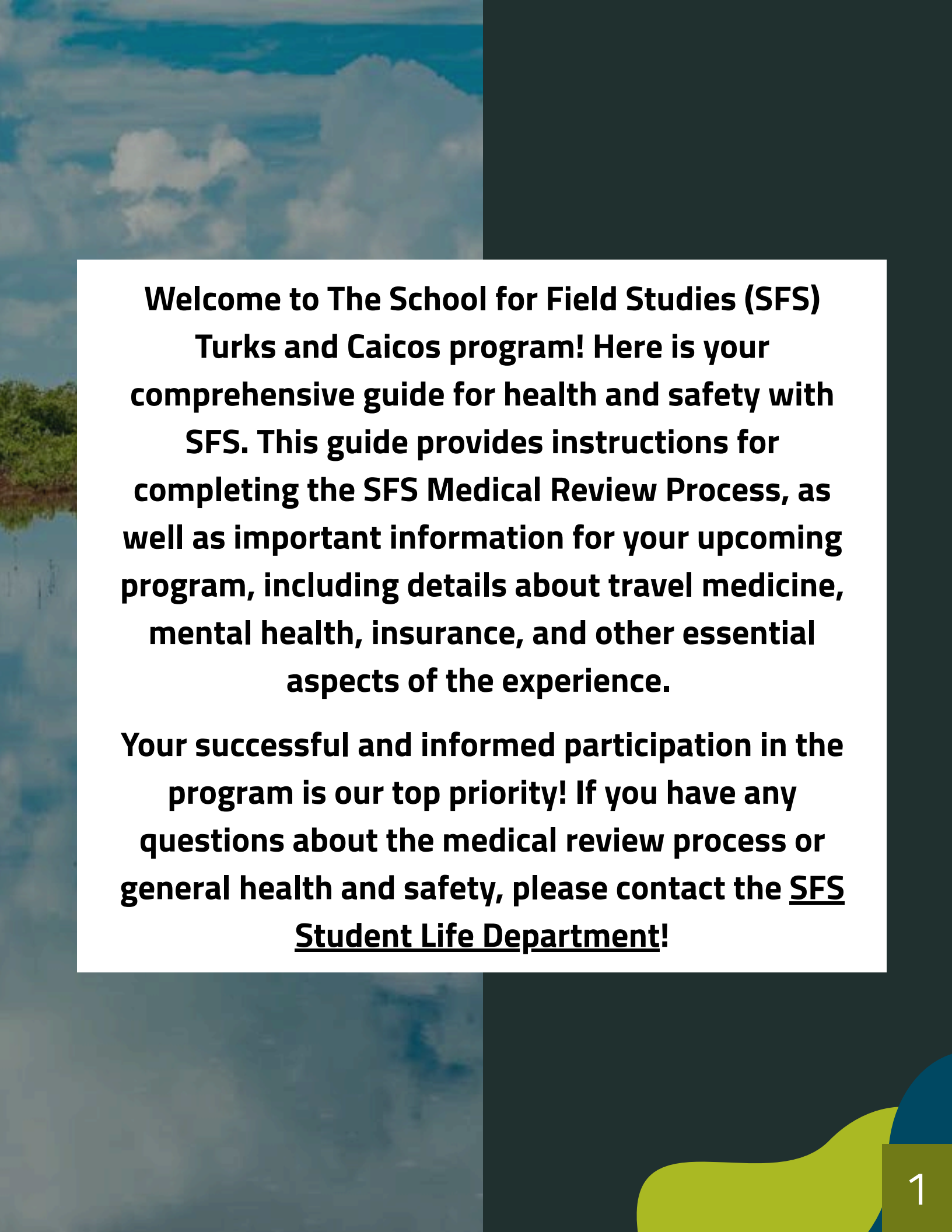




TURKS & CAICOS

HEALTH & SAFETY GUIDE



Welcome to The School for Field Studies (SFS) Turks and Caicos program! Here is your comprehensive guide for health and safety with SFS. This guide provides instructions for completing the SFS Medical Review Process, as well as important information for your upcoming program, including details about travel medicine, mental health, insurance, and other essential aspects of the experience.

Your successful and informed participation in the program is our top priority! If you have any questions about the medical review process or general health and safety, please contact the SFS Student Life Department!

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PRE-DEPARTURE MEDICAL REVIEW

WHAT IS MEDICAL REVIEW?

Once enrolled, all participants are required to complete the SFS Medical Review Process. This process helps our staff understand your medical and mental health needs, as well as any accommodations that may be needed. The review is not about exclusion; rather, it helps us provide the appropriate support and create a safe and supportive experience for all participants.

Our approach to your physical and mental well-being is one of open communication and collaboration. In turn, SFS may reach out to both you and your physicians and/or mental health providers as needed. **SFS reserves the right to decide if a participant cannot go on an SFS program from a health and safety standpoint.**

DEADLINE FOR MEDICAL PAPERWORK



FALL
JUNE 1



SPRING
NOVEMBER 1



SUMMER 1
APRIL 1



SUMMER 2
MAY 1

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS

HEALTH HISTORY FORM

Self Disclosure form completed by participant

- Current & Past Diagnoses
- Current Medications
- Previous Hospitalizations/Surgeries
- Allergies & Asthma
- Mental Health History
- Physical and/or Academic Accommodations

PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

SFS Medical Forms must have doctor's signature.

Must be completed **within 6 months of program start date.**

SUPPLEMENTAL PAPERWORK

Based on participant medical history

- Life Saving Medication Form
- Medical Specialist Form
- Mental Health Provider Evaluation
- Psychotropic Medication Form
 - More information on pg. 5
- Diver's Medical Questionnaire
 - More information on pg. 7
- Spirometry/Pulmonary Test

INTERNATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE

Include comprehensive coverage for basic medical care, including

- non-urgent illness or injury (i.e., gastrointestinal distress, ankle sprains, etc.),
- laboratory tests
- prescription medication

Valid in Turks & Caicos for the full duration of the program.

SUPPLEMENTAL MEDICAL PAPERWORK



Life Saving Medication

Required if you are prescribed any lifesaving medication (Epi-Pen, rescue inhaler, insulin, seizure medication, etc.). This form must be completed by the medical professional who manages this condition, such as an allergist or neurologist.



Psychotropic Medication

Required if you're prescribed psychotropic medication. If you're not sure if your medication is considered psychotropic, please consult with your prescribing physician.



Mental Health Provider Evaluation

Required if you have seen a mental health provider (i.e., counselor, therapist, psychologist, psychiatrist, etc.) within the past two years.



Medical Specialist Form

Required if you have been treated by a medical specialist for any reason within the past two years. For example, if you're under the care of a neurologist or cardiologist; have epilepsy (or experience seizures), Crohn's disease, diabetes, etc.; have had orthopedic surgery within the past two years; or are under the care of a nutritionist or mental health provider for disordered eating.

You are not required to complete this form if under the care of a dermatologist, optometrist, or gynecologists.



MEDICAL REVIEW SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

To ensure a smooth and successful enrollment process, please carefully follow the instructions below when submitting your medical documents:

Complete All Forms Accurately & Fully

- Inaccurate or incomplete forms may result in restrictions on activities, dismissal from the program, or rescinded acceptance.

Submit Only SFS Medical Paperwork

- Do not submit any additional documents from doctors.
- All required SFS medical paperwork can be found in your SFS Student Portal.

Report Any Health Changes

- If your health status changes after submitting your medical forms, you must notify SFS immediately.

Medical Forms for Consecutive Programs

- If you are participating in two consecutive sessions in different locations (e.g., Summer 1 & Summer 2, or Summer 1 & Fall), you must submit separate medical documents for each location.
- However, the Health History Form only needs to be submitted once.

Medical Review Process

- A member of the SFS Student Life Team may contact you to discuss any information in your medical forms as part of the review process.

How to Submit:

1. **Complete all medical forms as instructed.**
2. **Double-check for missing information or errors.**
3. **Upload your completed forms to your SFS Portal.**



SCUBA DIVING MEDICAL PAPERWORK

SCUBA diving requires good physical and mental health to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience. Certain medical conditions can increase the risk of diving-related complications, including decompression sickness and pressure-related health issues. **All participants interested in SCUBA diving must have a doctor complete and sign a Diver's Medical Questionnaire (DMQ)** before participation to ensure any pre-existing conditions or medical concerns are properly evaluated before diving. Individuals with certain medical conditions are not permitted to dive with SFS or may need additional medical consultation prior to diving (see following page).

REQUIRED FOR ALL DIVERS

Diver's Medical Questionnaire (DMQ)

- Student completes Pgs. 1 & 2 by hand
- Physician reviews and signs pg. 3

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS

DEPENDING ON PERSONAL MEDICAL HISTORY

- Spirometry Test Results
- Documentation for psychotropic medications & fitness for diving
- Diver's Alert Network (DAN) Consultation (plus additional testing or follow-up if required)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is a spirometry test and why is it required?

- A spirometry test is a common pulmonary function test that measures lung capacity and airflow, assessing how well your lungs are functioning.
- SCUBA diving involves increased underwater pressure, which can exacerbate respiratory conditions and pose serious risks if lung function is compromised. A spirometry test helps ensure you can safely participate in diving activities. If you meet any of the above criteria, you must complete a spirometry test and receive medical clearance before participating in SCUBA diving.

Who Needs a Spirometry Test?

A spirometry test is required for participants intending to SCUBA dive if they:

- **Regularly smoke either e-cigarettes, vapes, nicotine, etc.**
- Have a history of asthma (including childhood asthma).
- Have had nose, ear, or throat surgery within the last six months.
- Experience chronic sinus or lung infections.
- Have difficulty breathing due to a recent illness, including a previous or current COVID-19 diagnosis.
- Are currently prescribed an inhaler for any reason.

What is a DAN Consultation?

- A DAN consultation connects your primary care provider with a hyperbaric physician who will review your medical history and assess your fitness for SCUBA diving.
 - Some health conditions—such as heart or lung issues, anxiety, regularly prescribed medication, or neurological conditions—can present risks while diving.
 - A DAN physician provides expert guidance to help your provider determine if you are medically fit to dive.

■ **This consultation is a resource to support your primary care provider's decision-making, but it does not replace the need for final clearance.**

SCUBA DIVING SEVERE HEALTH RISKS

The potential diver and their physician must weigh the benefits to be had by diving against an increased risk of injury or death due to the participant's medical history. Severe Risk implies that an individual is believed to be at substantially elevated risk of injury compared with the general population. **SFS reserves the right to determine a student's ability to dive on program.**

PULMONOLOGICAL

- History of spontaneous pneumothorax
- Impaired exercise performance due to respiratory disease
- Respiratory impairment secondary to cold gas breathing
- Pulmonary hypertension

CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH

- Untreated symptomatic coronary artery disease
- Dilated or obstructive cardiomyopathy
- Heart failure
- Pulmonary hypertension
- Long QT syndrome or other arrhythmia-inducing channelopathies
- Paroxysmal arrhythmias causing unconsciousness or impairment of exercise capacity
- Poor exercise capacity of apparent cardiac origin
- Moderate to severe valvular lesions
- Complex congenital cardiac disease
- Atrial septal defect
- Presence of an implanted cardiac defibrillator
- Multiple episodes of immersion pulmonary edema

NEUROLOGICAL

- Any abnormalities where there is a significant probability of unconsciousness, hence putting the diver at increased risk of drowning. Divers with spinal cord or brain abnormalities where perfusion is impaired may be at increased risk of decompression sickness. Some conditions are as follows:
 - Epilepsy or history of seizures, other than childhood febrile seizures
 - History of transient ischemic attack (TIA) or cerebrovascular accident (CVA) or serious (central nervous system, cerebral or inner ear) decompression sickness with residual deficits
 - Recurrent episodes of loss of consciousness or fainting

MENTAL HEALTH/BEHAVIORAL

- Active major depression, bipolar or psychotic disorder
- History of panic attacks
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Severe intellectual handicap

GASTROINTESTINAL RISKS

- Active inflammatory bowel disease
- Gastric outlet obstruction of a degree sufficient to produce recurrent vomiting
- Chronic or recurrent small bowel obstruction
- Severe gastroesophageal reflux
- Achalasia, Paraesophageal hernia, or Gastroparesis

METABOLIC or ENDOCRINOLOGICAL

- The potentially rapid change in level of consciousness associated with hypoglycemia in diabetics on insulin therapy or certain oral hypoglycemic medications can result in drowning.
 - Diving is therefore generally contraindicated, except when conducted according to the consensus guidelines for recreational diving with diabetes.
- Currently pregnant or trying to get pregnant
 - Note: in cases where pregnancy is discovered after diving, it is not considered grounds for termination.

OTOLARYNGOLOGICAL

- | | |
|---|--|
| • Monomeric tympanic membrane (TM) | • Uncorrected upper airway obstruction |
| • Open TM perforation | • Laryngectomy or status post partial laryngectomy |
| • Tube myringotomy | • Tracheostomy |
| • History of stapedectomy, ossicular chain surgery, inner ear surgery, or vestibular decompression sickness | • Uncorrected laryngocele |
| • Facial nerve paralysis secondary to barotrauma | • Symptomatic nasal or sinus polyps |
| • Inner ear disease other than presbycusis | • Ménière's disease |

OPHTHAMOLOGICAL

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Recent ophthalmic surgery prior to completion of the recommended convalescent period. | • Any acute infectious or inflammatory ocular disorder which produces significant pain, photophobia, diplopia, or decrease in vision. |
| • Inadequate vision to function safely in the underwater environment. | • Presence of a hollow orbital implant. |
| • Visually significant deficits from previous episodes of decompression sickness or arterial gas embolism. | • Intraocular gas. |



SFS does not enroll participants in international health insurance. Therefore, all participants are required to obtain a health insurance plan for their time abroad. This plan must:

1. Include comprehensive coverage for basic medical care, including non-urgent illness or injury (i.e., gastrointestinal distress, ankle sprains, etc.), laboratory tests, and prescription medication
2. Be valid in the country (or countries) where your SFS program is based
3. Be valid for the full duration of the program

It is the participants' responsibility to ensure the international health insurance plan meets these requirements. SFS does not review individual insurance policies and does not provide recommendations for specific insurance providers.

Tips on Finding International Health Insurance

- Check with your study abroad office about automatic enrollment in an international health insurance policy.
- Check with your domestic insurance provider to see if your policy meets the requirements above for international coverage.
- Search for study abroad student insurance or ask study abroad office for guidance, as you may find policies that are priced and designed for participants.

Evacuation & Repatriation Insurance

All SFS participants are automatically enrolled in the *SFS Emergency Evacuation and Repatriation Insurance* plan through American International Group, Inc. (AIG). This insurance is valid for the duration of the program, but does not cover personal travel pre or post program. The plan covers relevant costs related to transportation, accommodation, and medical care associated with a medical or security evacuation (i.e. lifesaving support during transport in an air evacuation) when deemed necessary. Benefits include:

- \$350,000 for emergency medical evacuation;
- \$100,000 for emergency security evacuation;
- \$20,000 for repatriation of remains.

This plan does NOT provide health, medical, or dental insurance. You are required to have your own health insurance that is valid in the country (or countries) where your program is based.

Keep in mind that most insurance plans work on a reimbursement basis, as many public or private medical care facilities abroad do not accept insurance as payment. Therefore, participants should bring sufficient funds (i.e. a credit card with at least a \$3,000 limit) to pay for medical expenses upfront, and then request reimbursement when you return home.

The AIG policy cannot insure individuals weighing over 350lbs due to restrictions on the type of air transportation used. In turn, participants who do not meet this requirement set forth by the AIG policy will not be able to participate in an SFS program due to a lack of necessary evacuation coverage.



GENERAL HEALTH

TRAVEL MEDICINE

NO REQUIRED VACCINATIONS

TRAVELERS HEALTH GUIDANCE

SFS does not require or collect details on participant vaccination status for SFS Turks and Caicos.

SFS does not provide guidance on vaccinations and medications, and strongly recommends all participants visit a travel medicine professional before traveling abroad. These experts can provide vaccine and prophylactic medication recommendations based on your personal health history and program location. They can also offer insights into general health and safety concerns related to international travel.

International public health organizations, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and National Travel Health Network and Center (NaTHNaC), strongly recommend that all travelers be up-to-date with routine vaccinations (i.e. MMR, Hepatitis A and B, Polio, Chickenpox, Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis, Flu, etc.) and the COVID-19 vaccination in order to protect themselves and vulnerable populations in countries that may not have access to preventative vaccinations.

For more information, visit:

- [CDC's Travelers' Health](#)
- [NaTHNaC](#)
- [Canada Traveler's Health: Turks and Caicos](#)

FIND A TRAVEL CLINIC IN YOUR AREA!

- Visit [The International Society of Travel Medicine](#) (scroll down to "Global Travel Clinic Directory").
- Contact the health center on your campus to assist.

Please note the information provided here is based on departure from the U.S. There may be different recommendations for those whose point of origin is not the U.S. In this case, speak with a travel medicine professional in the country from which you will depart.

Field excursions occur across island for duration of program apart from arrival and departure in Providenciales.



MANAGING CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS WHILE ABROAD

The rigorous nature of SFS programs and the challenges of international travel can trigger or worsen existing medical conditions (i.e., allergies, asthma, heart conditions, diabetes, epilepsy, etc.), even if they are currently well-managed or in remission.

Routine Medical Care & Monitoring

SFS programs take place in remote locations where routine medical care is not available. **Routine doctor's appointments are not feasible while participating in an SFS program.** If you have a condition which has been newly diagnosed, significantly worsened or resurfaced within the past 6 months or your condition requires regular monitoring by a medical professional (daily, weekly, or monthly), SFS programs may not be suitable.

- **Mental Health services may be extremely limited or not be available at all while abroad, see pg. 11.**

Medical Disclosure & Planning

Once accepted, you must disclose all current medical conditions and ongoing care needs in your Health History Form and Student Life Survey.

This allows SFS to determine whether your program location can adequately support your health and safety needs.

If there are any changes to your medical history before departure, it is the participant's responsibility to update SFS.

Environmental Considerations

If you have a medical condition that could be affected by sun exposure, aridity, humidity, cold, or insect bites, consult with your doctor to develop a care plan suited to both your medical history and the program location.

Allergies & Asthma

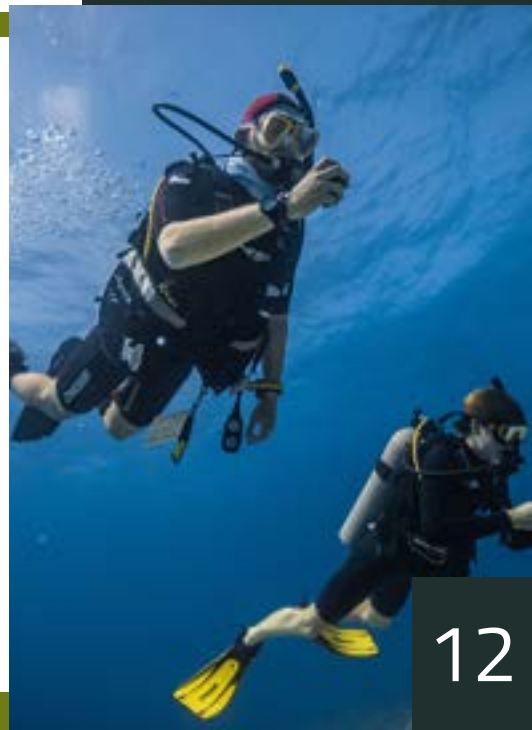
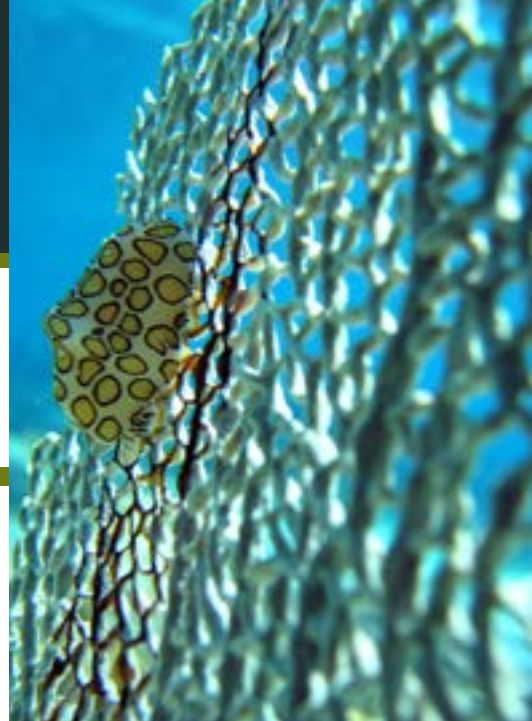
Although your health may currently be well-maintained, it is possible that you react differently to new environmental allergens abroad.

Allergies: If you have allergies that result in anaphylaxis, bring two or more Epi-Pens with you. Always carry them with you, including during field trips to remote sites.

- Epi-pen prescription can be refilled at the local clinic with a valid prescription.

Asthma: Even if you have not recently needed to use medication, participants should bring your inhaler (and a back-up inhaler, as these can generally not be sourced in-country).

- Participants interested in diving with any history of asthma and use of an inhaler will need to complete a Spirometry test before approval to dive.



MENTAL WELLBEING

SFS participants live and learn in immersive, often remote environments while exploring complex global environmental issues. Daily life at the Center involves adjusting to new cultures, navigating group dynamics with peers from diverse backgrounds, and being far from familiar support systems—all of which can impact mental wellbeing and sense of belonging.

Supporting your mental wellbeing and resilience is an important part of preparing for the SFS experience and while abroad. Mental wellbeing can be influenced by unfamiliar environments, new routines, and separation from established support systems. These factors may impact how participants feel emotionally, socially, and mentally. SFS encourages all participants to reflect on their current self-care strategies and think about how those may need to shift while abroad. Taking proactive steps—such as building healthy habits, identifying sources of support, and planning for how to manage stress—can help ease the transition and support overall wellbeing in the field.



TELUS HEALTH STUDENT SUPPORT

SFS provides participants with access to TELUS Health Student Support (formerly known as MySSP), an app-based counseling service. It offers free and confidential emotional health and wellbeing support, available 24/7 when connected to Wi-Fi.

Please download the app and save the number prior to departure: My SSP. Keep in mind that internet connectivity is often limited and intermittent at SFS centers; so while this service is available, access to it will not be consistent.

SFS programs do not have onsite counselors, and access to local mental health services may be limited or unavailable. Participants should plan ahead to manage their mental wellbeing and create a realistic support plan prior to departure.

Before Departure:

- Meet with your current mental health provider(s) to review your support needs and create a care plan for your time abroad.
- Discuss whether your provider is able to offer continued support remotely (via phone, email, or video chat) while you are away.
- Explore virtual support platforms or apps that offer international access and align with your personal preferences.
- Factor in time zone differences and the likelihood of inconsistent Wi-Fi or cell service when planning to connect with support networks at home.
- Practice using self-care tools and coping strategies now that you can continue while abroad.

While Abroad:

- Focus on building resilience by embracing new experiences and challenges with curiosity and flexibility.
- Schedule time for rest and self-care, especially in a group living setting where personal space may be limited.
- Stay connected with trusted people in your life through pre-scheduled check-ins that align with your program's daily routine.
- Use grounding techniques, mindfulness practices, journaling, or other coping strategies to manage feelings of stress or isolation.
- If you need to connect with a mental health provider back home, speak with staff to request private space and access to service.





MEDICATION ACCESSIBILITY ABROAD

Participants are recommended to bring enough over the counter (OTC) and prescription medication (including any prophylactic medication recommended by your doctors) to last the entire duration of the program. This also applies to any personal travel that may be done before or after the program. Filling existing prescriptions or finding replacement medication - including common OTC medication - is often not possible abroad.

Changes in Medications?

- List all medications in your Health History Form and alert SFS to any changes, including dosage, as early as possible.
- Consult with your doctor(s) and/or insurance company to confirm your medications' availability while abroad.
- It is recommended to adjust medications 4-6 weeks before the program start date, should your medication(s) not be available in country.

Before Mailing Medications...

- Conduct thorough research and seek official guidance to ensure compliance with all applicable laws and regulations. (Mobility International USA).
 - Shipping prescription medications internationally is fraught with legal challenges and potential risks.
- If you must, consult with the embassy or consulate of the destination country before attempting to ship prescription medications. They can provide the most accurate and up-to-date information regarding the legality and any restrictions on such shipments.
- **Be wary as it may be delayed, damaged, or lost.**

Vacation Override Letters

- Insurance companies do not typically dispense more than a one-month supply of psychotropic medication or a three-month supply of other medication.
- Work **early** with your prescribing physician and insurance provider to request a "Vacation Override" for prescriptions of more than 100 days.
- Insurance companies may request a letter to verify the program and time abroad. Please contact the [Student Life Department](#) for assistance.

Traveling with Medications?

- Medications that need to be refrigerated or larger than 100mL: Review [Transportation Security Administration: Traveling with Medications](#)
- Keep all medications in the original container with prescription information and in carry-on luggage to avoid issues with customs when entering the host country.
 - Additionally, it is advisable to travel with a doctor's letter stating your medications and the duration of your program.

Controlled Substances

- Controlled substances and steroid medication may have additional restrictions in your host country.
 - Recommendation: Speak with the prescribing physicians and insurance provider **early** to check:
 - name and availability abroad
 - prescribed quantities/dosages
 - if it requires tests or prescription from a local specialist.
- SFS prohibits Medical Marijuana and some types of Cannabidiol (CBD) oil due to host-country laws and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Transport Security Administration (TSA) restrictions.
 - If you currently use medical marijuana, discuss alternative options with your physician.

Refrigerated Medications?

- Medications that need refrigeration can be stored at the SFS Center in a communal fridge.
- If you have a medication that needs to be administered by a medical professional, contact SFS to get these appointments scheduled while abroad!



**TURKS AND CAICOS
HEALTH AND
SAFETY**

Life in South Caicos

Weather, Wildlife, and Daily Life

WEATHER

- Hot and high humidity year-round.
- Average temperatures range from 70-90°F.

Hurricane Season

- Hurricanes are possible June–November.
 - Staff monitor the weather daily and will alert participants as necessary to any weather conditions.
 - Adverse weather conditions may cause delays or cancellations of water-based field excursions.

WILDLIFE IN SOUTH CAICOS

Dogs at the SFS TCI Center

- Two dogs live at the SFS TCI Center. While the SFS Center is primarily outdoors, they may occasionally enter the classroom, and pet fur and dander can accumulate.
 - Dogs are not permitted in student housing.

Biodiversity in South Caicos

- **On Land:** Biting and stinging plants, fire and bullet ants, snakes, bats, spiders.
 - Stepping on conch shells buried in the sand can result in cuts.
 - Dive boots or sturdy water shoes/sandals are required to minimize these injuries while wading in shallow water.
- **Marine Life:** Jellyfish, fire coral, urchins, crabs, morays, sharks, and rays, etc.
 - Environmental exposure to animals and plants can bring unwanted skin or physical reactions.

ACCLIMATING TO CARIBBEAN HEAT & WATERS

Managing Hair with prolonged exposure to salt water

- Taking care of your hair in high heat and humidity is important for all. It is particularly important for those with curly hair or more fragile hair types. Consider the following:
 - Bring conditioners or deep treatments for post-salt water exposure.
 - Braiding hair for extra protection in water can help!
 - Long or very thick synthetic braids can be cumbersome in the water as they become very heavy over long periods of time in the water.
 - Natural braids and hairstyles are generally easier to care for when spending lots of time in the ocean snorkeling and sweating a lot in the field.

Saltwater Showers:

- Freshwater is limited. Participants only have access to 1 freshwater shower per week.

AIR CONDITIONING (or lack of!)

- Air conditioning is a privilege. It is very costly and the majority of locals do not live with air conditioners.
- The SFS Turks and Caicos Center has air conditioning in all offices and student classroom.
- The lounge spaces, student rooms, or dining room have several fans, **without A/C**.
 - To conserve energy we ask that participants turn off the A/C when not using the room.

Life at SFS Turks & Caicos: What to Expect

While on program, you'll connect with fellow participants, staff, and community members who share your passion for environmental conservation and sustainability. Each cohort contributes valuable research, building upon the work of past participants and adding to the SFS legacy of scientific knowledge and positive impact.

As part of a tight-knit, community-based experience, participants from diverse backgrounds live, work, and study together in a collaborative setting. While this immersive environment is rewarding, it also means limited personal space and structured schedules. Participants must proactively carve out personal time and practice self-care to maintain balance between group activities and individual well-being.

Living & Working in Close Quarters

Living and working in close quarters with fellow participants is a core part of the SFS Turks & Caicos experience. While this fosters a strong sense of community, it also presents challenges related to personal space, privacy, and group dynamics.

- **Shared Spaces:** You will share bedrooms with up to five other roommates and en suite bathrooms.
- **Respecting Boundaries:** Understanding and respecting personal boundaries, as well as managing group dynamics, will be key to creating a positive living environment for everyone.
- **Flexibility & Adaptability:** You may need to adjust to others' living habits, personal preferences, and cultural differences to foster a supportive and inclusive community.
- **Conflict Resolution:** When conflicts arise—whether in group work, shared living spaces, or cultural misunderstandings—approach them with an open mind and a solution-oriented attitude.
- **Communicating with Staff:** The Health and Wellness Managers (HWMs) are available to support you in addressing any issues respectfully and effectively.
- **Mental Health & Stress Management:** Adjusting to a new environment, group living, and field-based learning may bring up feelings of stress, homesickness, or culture shock. Be proactive in using healthy self-care strategies and reaching out for support when needed.

Cultural Awareness & Respect

The Turks & Caicos Islands have a rich cultural heritage influenced by African, European, and Caribbean traditions. The local community is warm and welcoming, but it's important to be mindful of customs, traditions, and social norms:

- **Respect for Local Traditions:** Approach cultural exchanges with curiosity and respect, especially when interacting with island residents.
- **Adaptability:** Be ready for unfamiliar environments and routines, including changes in diet, accommodations, homesickness, long days, and limited amenities.
- **Dress & Behavior:** While casual attire is common, modesty is expected. Dress appropriately when visiting local communities or religious services.
 - SFS Turks and Caicos is a historic part of the community and the coral lab leads parts of local restoration efforts; therefore, we have a lot of visitors and tours that come through.

Independent Time & Self-Care

Field-based programs require extensive time spent with peers, so finding ways to recharge is essential. Consider how you cope with challenges, adapt to new settings, and maintain a positive attitude when faced with discomfort.



ACCESS TO MEDICAL CARE

SFS maintains detailed risk assessment and management plans outlining risks and response protocols, including nearby medical facilities and their treatment capabilities. These plans ensure that staff are always aware of the best route for appropriate medical care. If a visit to a medical care facility is needed, an SFS staff member will accompany the student to the appointment.

Be aware that there may be times when access to medical care is delayed, such as on expedition. Participants are responsible for all medical costs and all incidental expenses including transportation, accommodations, etc., incurred by all parties involved. This may include costs related to COVID-19 quarantining. Some medical emergencies or conditions may necessitate medical withdrawal from the program. Final decisions on medical withdrawal are made by SFS.

DISTANCES & TIMES AWAY

Access to medical care can be delayed up to 24 hours in a remote environment.

Basic Medical Care

Small medical clinic on South Caicos.

Advanced Medical Care, Decompression Chamber, or Medical Specialists

2+ hours. Reached by ferry or plane, which can take several hours. In some cases, demands an overnight stay depending on the commercial ferry and flight schedule.

In the event of severe or life-threatening emergencies, emergency evacuation with support from the US Coast Guard may be required.

Always carry all life-saving medications and scheduled medications on person.



DIETARY NEEDS & PREFERENCES

At SFS, we do our best to support participants with food allergies and dietary needs, but it may not always be possible depending on the type of allergy, local food availability, and other factors. While we work closely with local vendors and staff to support specific needs, certain ingredients or alternatives may not be easily accessible in every location. Participants should communicate their needs in advance so SFS can help determine if the program location is a good fit.

TYPICAL DIET IN TURKS & CAICOS

- Meals commonly include rice, potatoes, protein, salad, and canned vegetables.
- Fresh fruits and vegetables are not always readily available.
- Due to the remote location, meals often consist of canned foods, frozen vegetables, and carbs.
- Cumin is a common spice used in meals.

IMPORTANT NOTE FOR MEDICALLY NECESSARY DIETS

- If you have a medically necessary diet or life-threatening food allergies, please contact the [Student Life Department](#) to discuss your needs in advance.
- If you have a food allergy that requires no cross contamination, please describe your needs in as much detail as possible in your Health History Form. This information will help SFS determine if your allergen can be supported safely, and if so, how.

DIETARY CONSIDERATIONS

- Vegetarians can be supported, but those with specialty diets (vegan, gluten-free, pescatarian, etc.) may struggle to find enough variety to meet their nutritional needs.
 - **Gluten-free products are difficult to find locally.**
- SFS cannot guarantee that strict religious dietary practices, such as Halal or Kosher, will be accommodated.
- Grocery stores in South Caicos sell an extremely limited variety of US products and/or alternative snacks at an elevated price.
 - Bringing non-perishable snacks such as granola bars, protein bars, or trail mix is highly recommended





PHYSICAL READINESS

PHYSICAL DEMANDS AND WATER ACTIVITIES

The program includes physically demanding activities such as snorkeling, diving, and field research in marine environments. Make sure you are prepared by:

- Completing a 200-meter swim evaluation in the ocean (comparable to a 1-mile (1.6 km) run).
- Being comfortable with tropical, marine environments (ie. strong currents, waves, heat, and humidity).
- Ensuring you are physically fit to handle strenuous activities like lifting your own SCUBA gear, which can weigh up to 50 lbs.

Considerations for Accessibility:

- Participants with mobility impairments may face limitations, especially during water-based activities.

Ear Infections:

- Ear infections/ear injuries are a common occurrence with routine snorkeling and diving.
- Participants should speak with primary care doctors or a travel medical specialist about proactive care and hygiene for their ear, nose, and throat.
- Early identification of ear issues while on program is imperative to a student's health and participation of water activities.

SCUBA Diving Requirements:

- Participants opting for SCUBA diving must submit a physician-reviewed and signed Diver's Medical Questionnaire. Depending on personal health history, follow-up medical appointments may be required before diving.
- Participants **who regularly smoke or utilize e-cigs, vapes, have** any history of asthma, recent surgery on ear, nose, throat, will need to complete a spirometry test.
- Be prepared to spend time in the water on most days when weather conditions are favorable.

WATER BASED FIELDWORK FAQ

Is there a Swim Evaluation?

- Yes! 200 meter swim in the ocean along a beach, average water depth 6'/1.8m. It is not meant to be a race; any swim stroke is allowed and there is no time limit, but it does need to be a continuous swim without stopping.
 - Masks or goggles can be used, but fins, snorkels, or additional flotation are not allowed.

What can I expect to see on dives?

- Each dive site has its own mooring at a depth of 10-20m/30-60' and has a general structure of patch reefs leading to the main reef wall at 20-25m/60-82'. Coral cover will begin to lessen the deeper the site, but also increases chances of seeing marine life migrating along the reef.
- On adventures for the Advanced Open Water Certification, participants are required to complete night dives.

What sort of exposure protection should I bring?

- Required: Year-round participants find an extremely high UV index of 7-12; full-length rash guards or swim shirts are essential for preventing burns while snorkeling or diving
- Season Dependent: Water temperatures range from a low of 78°F/25°C in January to a high of 84°F/28°C in August. Wetsuits will also be needed depending on your session:
 - **Spring:** Snorkelers and divers prefer a full length, 3mm wetsuit. Participants who run warm may be fine with a 1mm full or a 3mm shorty, whereas those that get cold have enjoyed a 5mm full wetsuit.
 - **Summer 1 & 2:** Typically a wetsuit is not needed as air and water temps are starting to get hot, but can be brought if desired.
 - **Fall:** A full-length 3mm wetsuit will be needed for November and December as water cools down again. Similar to the spring semester, there is flexibility in wetsuit thickness based on thermal preference.

Do I need prior snorkeling or SCUBA diving experience?

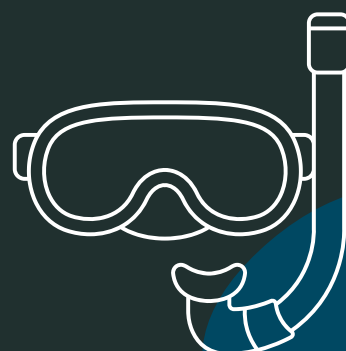
- It is helpful to come to the program with some snorkel experience so you are not overwhelmed with the currents and waves of ocean snorkeling, but we can work with a range of snorkeling abilities for all programs.

How often will I be in the water?

- All water-based excursions are **weather-dependent**.
- For all sessions, participants can expect to be in the water 2-6 days of the week.
- **Academic field exercises can all be completed by snorkeling, and most are planned as snorkel-only with an occasional dive option for those certified.**
 - Fieldwork duration can range from 1-4 hours depending on the research objective and may include multiple sites. For longer days in the field, participants need to be prepared with sun protection, water, and snacks.

What are some useful items to bring to the Waterfront (with limited variety and availability on site)?

- **Dramamine or other motion-sickness medication.** Sailors often say, "It is not a question of if you will get seasick, but when."
- **Electrolyte powders!** It is easy to sweat A LOT during field activities (even in the water), and these are so helpful at maintaining your hydration and energy. Bring your preferred brand!
- **Underwater dive light.** Participants must bring their own dive light for night dives and snorkeling.



While on an SFS program, you will join new communities to learn and research the complex global environmental issues facing our planet. In the daily life at a remote field center, you face new cultural stressors, work and live with peers of different backgrounds, and may feel far from your home, all which may challenge mental health and a sense of belonging. Studying abroad is a journey that balances being present in new surroundings, adapting to life in a new culture, reflecting on your passions and identities, and becoming resilient.

Consider some of these following questions as you prepare for your study abroad experience! You could journal, doodle, or take some time to intentionally think about these topics.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What do you consider important components of your identity? How do you describe yourself? Think about aspects of your life that you consider most important and defining.
- How might aspects of my identity change or evolve while I'm abroad?
- What are my biggest goals while I'm abroad? What do I want to accomplish, both academically and socially?
- What am I most excited about? What am I most nervous about?
- What self care practices can I utilize while abroad? How can I make sure I'm healthy, both mentally and physically?
- How can I influence the environment around me in a positive way?
- What kind of traveler, student, person do I want to be? How can I accomplish and hold these values true?



RESOURCE LIST

THROUGH SFS

- [Billing Information](#)
- [SFS LGBTQ+ Guide](#)
- [SFS Turks and Caicos Homepage](#)
- Student Resource Folder
- SFS Turks and Caicos Field Guide
 - Packing List + Financial Planner
- [SFS Academic Handbook \(2024\)](#)
- [SFS Policies & Procedures \(2023\)](#)

EXTERNAL LINKS

- [US State Department: Turks and Caicos](#)
- [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#)
- [Telus Health Student Support](#)
- [US Embassy Websites: Bahamas](#)
- [Center of Disease Control: Turks & Caicos](#)



CONTACT SFS

Keep up with SFS Follow us on Instagram [@theSFS/](#)[@the_SFS_tci](#), read [news from the field](#), and find the [full list of the SFS team bios here!](#)

Questions about health and safety? StudentLife@fieldstudies.org

General Health & Safety, medical paperwork, immunizations, managing medical conditions, and dietary needs and preferences.

Questions about admissions or enrollment? Admissions@fieldstudies.org

Which program is the best fit, application materials, and travel and visa logistics.

Questions about billing? Billing@fieldstudies.org

Deposit payments, invoices, billing deadlines, financial aid packages, and loan paperwork.

Questions about academics? Academics@fieldstudies.org

Learning accommodations, syllabi, and directed research.