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GEARBOX: Traveler ER

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Name: Traveler ER

What it is: Portable USB memory stick that holds medical records, emergency contacts and other details.

How it works: Plug the blood-red stick into your computer and type into the pre-formatted pages details on any medical conditions you suffer, medications you're taking, contacts for doctors and family, insurance details and a variety of other info, from your blood group and immunization history to your passport number. Then tuck the slim stick into a purse or pocket or put it on a key ring to have your medical records quickly available in case you suffer a medical emergency, particularly one that leaves you unconscious or unable to respond to questions. The stick also is useful if you forget your medication while traveling or otherwise need to access your medical details while away from home.

The good: You can set a password to protect the most sensitive data in the stick, or all of it if you choose. But if you choose anything except the highest level of security, emergency room doctors can use the stick to quickly print out a range of crucial details, from medical history to allergies or contacts for your family. Places to store insurance and passport details also make the stick a compact way to safely carry all kinds of key information you might need while traveling, particularly if your wallet is stolen or lost. The data on the stick is easily updatable as often as you like.

The bad: The stick doesn't work with Apple computers or personal computer software older than Windows 2000. It also might not be much use if traveling in a region without relatively modern computers, though the stick does allow you to print your details from your home computer and carry them with you in a compact paper form if you suspect computer access will be a problem where you're headed.

Cost: \$29.95

www.traveler-er.com