

IMMUNIZATIONS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL

What you need to know before you get any vaccines

The incidence of infectious diseases that are preventable by vaccines and/or other methods of intervention are generally higher in foreign countries than in the United States. As a result, U.S. citizens carry with them a significant risk when they travel and are exposed to these diseases.

Requirements and recommendations for the use of vaccines and/or other preventive measures are based upon factors that take into consideration information from a variety of sources.

- International Health Regulations (IHR)
- Individual requirements/recommendations by country.
- Itinerary and sequence of travel by country.
- Risk of disease in any particular country.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Atlanta, Georgia offers comprehensive information on vaccines and personal health protection measures for travelers to any part of the world. You may contact CDC through any one of the following services.

- International Travelers Hotline - (888) 232-3228
- FAX Information Service - (888) 232-3299
- Web Site - www.cdc.gov (click on "Travelers Health")

What are the International Health Regulations (IHR)?

- Countries may only require a yellow fever vaccination certificate.
- Smallpox and cholera vaccination requirements were dropped from the IHR in 1973.
- Some countries still require foreign travelers to present an up-to-date certificate of cholera immunization upon entry into, travel to, or arrival from a cholera infected country.
- Required immunizations must be entered -into the official yellow booklet, INTERNATIONAL CERTIFICATES OF VACCINATION. Each entry must be dated and signed by the physician or another health professional, authorized by the physician, who is responsible for the immunization. *Documentation of Yellow Fever Vaccine must be validated* by the local health authority or by the administering physician/clinic who possesses a "Uniform" stamp.
- Most governments will permit an unvaccinated traveler to proceed, if he/she carries a signed statement by a physician of the medical reason for not being immunized. Such statements should be certified by the local health authority. However, some countries may quarantine unvaccinated persons or place them under surveillance.

PLEASE READ OTHER SIDE

What other vaccines are recommended for travel?

Specific vaccines are recommended for travel to developing countries. They provide personal health protection and, in many cases, they are more important for the well being of the traveler than the required shots!

- **Tetanus/Diphtheria (Td)** - Combination vaccine is recommended, for all persons, even those who reside in the United States.
- **Typhoid** - Not generally necessary for travelers who stay at the usual tourist accommodations in Mexico and most European and Caribbean countries. Suggested for travelers to most other foreign countries and, specifically, for persons who will be visiting in rural areas of Mexico.
- **Polio** - Single one-time booster is recommended for travel to Africa and to Southeast Asia.
- **Hepatitis A** - Recommended for most foreign travel, with the exception of Europe, Canada, Caribbean Islands, Australia, New Zealand and Japan.
- **Hepatitis B** - Now given as a routine to infants, children and adolescents., It is particularly recommended for adolescents and adults with prolonged travel to or residence in developing countries.
- **Meningococcus** - Advised for travel to developing countries where risk is high for meningococcal infection, e.g., parts of sub-Saharan Africa ("meningitis belt"). Saudi Arabia **requires** the vaccine for all pilgrims to the Hajj.
- **Malaria** - A vaccine does not exist. Oral medications are available for the usual types of malaria and for drug-resistant strains. The most common medication prescribed is called *LARIAM*, it is taken once weekly before, during and after travel.
- **Rabies** - Pre-exposure rabies vaccine is urged for persons who will have more than short-term travel in countries (including Mexico) where rabies is common in domestic and wild animals.
- **Japanese, B Encephalitis (JE)** - Moderately toxic vaccine, with use generally limited to travelers to Asia who will have prolonged rural exposure to mosquitoes in areas with a high likelihood of disease transmission, e.g., rice paddies.

Should other precautions be taken?

Immunizations provide only partial protection against certain diseases. Travelers must do their share by being selective with food, drink, and lodging, and by minimizing the potential for exposure to infectious diseases, e.g., protection against mosquito bites.

How soon should the vaccines be given?

Immunizations provide protection for periods of a few months to many years, depending on the type of vaccine. *It is essential for every traveler to plan ahead.*

- It takes 2-3 weeks for the body to build up an adequate level of immunity following receipt of a vaccine.
- Some shots are given in a series that requires more than one injection several days to weeks apart.
- Certain vaccines cannot be given at the same time that some medicines are being taken.

Have a pleasant trip and be careful!

REMEMBER: Injuries due to accidents are the leading cause of disability in travelers.