Advantages to Consultation

When travelling abroad, you may be exposed to diseases and infections that are not common in the United States. There are several precautions you can take to reduce/prevent illness during or after your travel. Consulting with a health care provider is an important step in your in travel preparation.

FAQ

Frequently asked questions by travelers.

Q: What vaccines do I need?
A: The CDC and WHO recommend ALL travelers have routine vaccines, i.e. measles-mumps-rubella (MMR), polio, diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis (DTP), varicella, and a yearly flu shot. They recommend MOST travelers to have the hepatitis A and B vaccines.

Q: Are there other vaccines or preventative medications that I will need?
A: Depending on the area of travel, further immunizations or prevention medications may be necessary. Additional recommendations may include typhoid vaccine, malaria prevention medication, rabies vaccines, and others.

Why Vaccinate Before Travel

With how widely vaccines are administered, vaccine preventable diseases occur rarely in the United States. However, preventable diseases do still occur in other countries. In the past, non-vaccinated travelers have gone to foreign countries and became ill during their travel. Upon returning to the US, those travelers then unintentionally exposed non-vaccinated people within their community, causing disease outbreaks. To protect yourself and others, get vaccinated.

“"It is important to remember that some types of international travel, especially to developing countries and rural areas, have higher health risks. Vaccine-preventable diseases that are rare in the United States can still be found in other parts of the world."

"-CDC

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Routine Vaccines

“Routine vaccines” are vaccines that are recommended to everybody in the United States. Most routine vaccines are given in childhood, but adults need routine vaccines as well. For example, a yearly flu shot and a DPT (tetanus) vaccine every ten years is recommended.

The routine vaccines that are recommended for travel include: measles-mumps-rubella (MMR), polio, diphtheria-pertussis-tetanus (DPT), varicella (chicken pox) hepatitis A and B, meningitis, and the yearly flu vaccine.

Diphtheria-Pertussis-Tetanus

These three diseases are caused by a bacteria. Diphtheria and pertussis are spread person to person and tetanus enters through cuts or wounds. Pertussis, known as Whooping Cough, causes coughing so severe that it becomes hard to breathe. Pertussis can lead to serious illnesses and even death, and is extremely dangerous to babies. Tetanus, known as Lockjaw, causes severe muscle spasms, making it impossible to open your mouth or swallow. Tetanus has a death rate of 2 out every 10 cases. Diphtheria creates a thick covering of the throat and can lead to breathing problems, heart failure, and death. People over the age of 7 should receive the TDaP (adult version of DPT) every 10 years and sometimes earlier depending on circumstance.

Measles-Mumps-Rubella

Measles, mumps, and rubella are serious diseases. Measles can cause rash, cough, runny nose, eye irritation, fever, hospitalization and sometimes even death. Mumps causes loss of appetite, swollen glands in the jaw, muscle pain, headache, and fever. Mumps virus can lead to complications including meningitis, deafness, and sterility. Rubella causes arthritis, mild fever, and a rash. Pregnant women who get rubella have an increased risk of miscarriage. Measles, mumps, and rubella are spread through the air, person to person. Prior to development of the MMR vaccine, these diseases were extremely common. The MMR vaccine is a two dose series. The two doses should be administered at least 30 days apart.

Polio

This disease has been eradicated in the US, but is still prevalent in some countries. Polio is caused by a virus. Polio doesn't usually cause serious illness; however, it can cause paralysis and meningitis. Polio can be deadly if the paralysis occurs to the muscles that help breathing. The year before the polio vaccine was created, it paralyzed and killed thousands of people. People who have never been vaccinated should receive 3 doses of IPV. The first two doses separated by 1-2 months and the third dose 6 to 12 months after the second dose.

Varicella

Varicella, also known as Chickenpox, is a common childhood disease. This virus causes fever, rash, itching, and tiredness. It can lead to scarring, skin infections, and sometimes even death. After the active phase of chickenpox, the virus remains dormant (sleeping) in a certain spot in your spinal cord. It can become active years later, causing shingles. A person who has never had chickenpox or received the vaccine should get two doses. The doses should be given 28 days apart.

More routine vaccines on next page.....
Routine Vaccines Continued…

Meningitis

Meningococcal disease, also known as meningitis, is caused by a bacterial infection. It causes the covering of the brain and spine to become inflamed. Meningitis can also lead to blood infections.

People at a greater risk of getting meningitis:

- Anyone travelling to, or living in, a place that meningitis is common.
- People exposed to the disease in an outbreak.
- College freshmen
- Lab personnel exposed to meningitis regularly

If you received the vaccine prior to age 16 a booster is needed.

Influenza

Influenza, also known as the flu, is a virus. The flu is spread by coughing, sneezing, and close contact. The symptoms of the flu can come on very suddenly and include: fever/chills, sore throat, muscle aches, fatigue, cough, headache, runny or stuffy nose. The flu can sometimes lead to more serious illnesses, such as, pneumonia and blood infections. Most people with the flu are too sick to work or do any activities.

After receiving the vaccine, it takes two weeks for protection to develop. The flu shot must be repeated annually, and immunity lasts for one year. Flu is common from October through May in the United States; however, influenza can occur year round in other area.
**Hepatitis B**

Hepatitis B is a viral infection that causes problems with the liver. The signs and symptoms of this infection are: loss of appetite, fatigue, pain in your muscles and joints, diarrhea, vomiting, and yellow skin or eyes (jaundice). Hepatitis B can cause long term affects, such as, liver damage, liver cancer, and even death.

People can become infected with hepatitis B in the following ways:

- contact with infected blood or body fluids
- unprotected sex with an infected person
- sharing needles, or accidental needle sticks with used needles

Adults getting hepatitis B vaccine need three doses. The second dose is given four weeks after the first dose and the third dose is given five months after the second.

**Hepatitis A**

Similar to hepatitis B, hepatitis A is a infection that affects your liver. The hepatitis A virus is found in the stool of people who are infected. You can get hepatitis A from eating or drinking water containing hepatitis A virus. The disease is also easily spread from person to person. Normal signs and symptoms of hepatitis A are flu-like illness, yellow skin or eyes, stomach pain and diarrhea.

The hepatitis A vaccine is a two dose series. The doses are to be administered six months apart. For travelers, even if you are not able to get both vaccines prior to your departure, it is still beneficial to receive the first dose before you travel. If you are only able to get one vaccine before your departure date, the CDC recommends getting that vaccine at least one month before travelling.
Yellow Fever

Yellow fever is a virus spread to humans by infected mosquitos. The virus can be found in parts of South America and Africa. The virus can cause varying symptoms from mild fever to severe liver disease. Typically, symptoms develop 3-6 days after infection. To diagnose yellow fever, your doctor will look at your symptoms, lab testing, and travel history. The care you receive for yellow fever disease will be based on the symptoms you present with.

There are multiple ways to protect yourself from yellow fever, including: using bug spray (DEET), wearing protective clothing, and getting vaccinated.

There are some countries that require travelers to show proof of the yellow fever vaccine before they are allowed to enter the country. The CDC recommends everybody over the age of 9 months that is traveling to high-risk areas receive the vaccine. Yellow Fever vaccines must be re-administered every 10 years.
Food and Water Safety

There are many illnesses and diseases that can be spread through food and water. People travelling to developing countries are at an even greater risk of contracting food and water borne infections.

There are several ways to reduce your risk of getting food or water borne infections. Avoid eating food served at room temperature, street vendor foods, runny eggs, undercooked meat or fish, unpasteurized dairy products, unwashed/unpeeled fruit and vegetables, condiments made with fresh ingredients (i.e. salsa), salads and salad bars, and bush meat. Consume drinks that are bottled and sealed, filtered water, ice made with filtered water, hot tea or coffee, and pasteurized milk. Avoid drinking tap or well water, fountain drinks, ice made with unfiltered water, and drinks made with tap or well water.

Illness during travel

The most common illness during travel is travelers diarrhea. To reduce your risk of getting traveler’s diarrhea, follow the food and water safety listed above and utilize good hand hygiene. If you become ill with travelers diarrhea you should stay hydrated. It may also be a good idea to take some over the counter medications with you (such as Tylenol, ibuprofen, Imodium for diarrhea, or other cold medicine). If you do bring over the counter medications, be sure to leave them in their original packaging. You should also research health care availability in the region in which you will be traveling, in case you need a doctor or hospital while you are away.