
Getting good advice?

It is important to get the right advice about any travel vaccinations and / or medicines you should take to reduce your risk of catching a serious illness whilst abroad. Bear in mind that holiday insurance cover may be invalid if you choose not to receive the recommended vaccinations.

Planning your trip

Seek health advice (**at least 6 weeks before travel**) from your GP, Practice Nurse or local community pharmacist (chemist). This advice should be given free of charge. What you need will depend on which countries you will be visiting, how you are travelling, and how long you will be staying there.

Travel vaccinations - free

All travellers should be up to date with the routine UK vaccines (e.g. diphtheria polio, tetanus). If eligible for flu & pneumococcal vaccines, these should be given. Your doctor can advise you on these vaccines. Specific travel vaccinations if needed are available free of charge on the NHS:

- ❖ Hepatitis A – Two injections (2nd dose given 6-12 months after the 1st protects for 20 years)
- ❖ Combined Hepatitis A & B (*anything less than 3 doses is not enough!*)
- ❖ Typhoid (not oral) - Can be given as a combined vaccine with Hepatitis A
- ❖ Cholera (only if high risk)

Your GP Practice may have these vaccines available at the surgery, or you may be given an NHS prescription to be dispensed by a community pharmacy.

Travel vaccinations – not free

Many injections recommended for travel to more exotic locations are not covered by the NHS. You may have to get them from a community pharmacy on a private prescription. Your doctor can charge a fee for writing the prescription and giving each injection. The pharmacist will make a charge for dispensing the vaccine. Costs will vary between pharmacies so you may want to ask for a few quotes before choosing where to have your prescription dispensed.

Travel vaccinations that are NOT routinely covered by the NHS include:

- ❖ Cholera
- ❖ Japanese encephalitis
- ❖ Meningococcal meningitis
- ❖ Rabies
- ❖ Tick borne encephalitis
- ❖ Hepatitis B
- ❖ Yellow fever. Only available from selected Borders GP practices (Hawick and Duns) & private travel clinics
- ❖ BCG – available on NHS to people under 16 for extended stays to countries with high TB levels & living/working with local people. Others have to pay for it.

Your GP practice does not have to offer to give you injections for travel that are not available on the NHS. Your doctor may refer you to a special travel clinic instead. You should ask your pharmacist about medicines you may need to take with you for travel illnesses such as upset tummy (e.g. oral rehydration sachets). You should also make sure you have supplies of insect repellent, anti-histamine tablets and an antiseptic spray proven to kill bacteria. It is sensible to make a simple first aid kit which includes essentials like plasters and painkillers. Your pharmacist will be able to advise you about this. Don't forget high factor sun lotion and after sun lotion!

Medicines which you may want to take 'just in case' you become ill are not provided on the NHS. This means you should usually buy these from your pharmacist, or your GP may write you a private prescription (see above).

Preventing malaria?

Malaria can be fatal. There is a high risk of catching malaria in many regions therefore it is essential to seek advice from your GP, Practice Nurse or pharmacist well in advance of your travel. Some anti-malaria tablets need to be started 3 weeks before travel so make sure you seek advice in plenty of time. *Also ensure that you complete the prescribed course!*

Medicines to prevent malaria should not be provided on the NHS. Some tablets may be bought over the counter at a community pharmacy (chemist). For some countries however you will need tablets that have to be prescribed by a doctor – this means you will need a private prescription (see above).

Regular medicines & lengthy travel

Take adequate supplies for your stay. Running out overseas can be costly and the exact medicine may not be available. NHS prescriptions for longer than 3 months supply should not be routinely given. If planning to be away for longer than 3 months, and need regular medicines, you will need to see a doctor in the country you are visiting.

Flight restrictions

If you use insulin or other medication which you need to inject, you will need a letter from your GP to allow syringes and other equipment to be carried in hand luggage. You may be able to use your repeat prescription request slip if this has all the relevant details. Check with your airline what information they require. Security measures may restrict carrying non-essential medicines in hand luggage. A letter may be required from your doctor or your prescription copy especially if a liquid medicine exceeds 100ml.

Controlled drugs

Many countries have strict laws about drugs such as codeine and morphine, even in low doses. Get a doctor's letter before travel if you use any medicines containing drugs such as these. Check with your travel agent to see if there are any restrictions.

Blood clot prevention

Some people are more at risk of deep vein clots than others. If this is the case for you (seek advice if in doubt) then use flight socks or stockings on flights longer than 4 hours. Unless advised by your doctor, don't take aspirin to reduce risk of blood clots when travelling for long distances. Try to regularly walk up and down the plane to exercise your legs.

Need further advice or information?

- ❖ NHS Inform www.nhsinform.co.uk
- ❖ NHS24 ☎ 111 www.nhs24.co.uk
- ❖ www.nhsborders.scot.nhs.uk
- ❖ Local health clinic or GP

This document is available on request in different languages, audio tape, Braille format, large print or BSL DVD. Please contact:

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June 2014