

# Protect your health before you travel

By Melissa Snyder

With summer travel season ramping up across the country and the world, it's important to stay safe and healthy. Travel brings risk of getting or spreading diseases. Before you go, take precautions to reduce your risk.

Travel vaccines are an important part of any international trip and are specific to your destination, trip duration, itinerary and type of travel. A person could be at higher risk of certain diseases on a longer trip versus a shorter trip or if they are staying in a rural area versus staying in a hotel in a larger city.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that people be up-to-date on all their routine vaccines before traveling. This includes tetanus, shingles, influenza, and COVID-19.

The CDC also recommends that all travelers be vaccinated against hepatitis A and hepatitis B. Hepatitis A immunization is especially important due to the risk of eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water.

Recent global outbreaks of measles and polio remind us that international travelers should be fully vaccinated against both polio and measles. Depending on travel location, adult travelers may need a polio booster if there is a current outbreak.

For some destinations, additional travel vaccines may be recommended to protect you against:

- Typhoid fever, which is often acquired by consuming contaminated food or water. This vaccine is recommended for most travelers going to destinations with typhoid present, especially when staying with friends or relatives or visiting rural areas.
- Yellow fever, which spreads through the bite of an infected mosquito and is found in certain parts of South America and Africa. The yellow fever vaccine may be required for entry into certain countries.
- Japanese encephalitis, which is spread through the bite of an infected mosquito. People are at risk when traveling to some parts of Asia and the Western Pacific when they are spending a lot of time outdoors in rural areas or traveling for a month or more.
- Meningococcal meningitis, which can infect travelers in the African Meningitis Belt of sub-Saharan Africa. This vaccine is especially recommended when traveling in the African dry season from December to June. It is also recommended for participants in the Hajj or Umrah pilgrimages in Saudi Arabia.

Other travel vaccines could include rabies, cholera and tick-borne encephalitis, depending on the travel location and itinerary.

International travelers should pack along medications they need to prevent malaria and travelers' diarrhea. Your healthcare provider can prescribe these medications before you leave.

RiverStone Health Immunization Clinic, 123 S. 27<sup>th</sup> St., offers travel consultations and vaccines for travelers. During the consultation you can discuss your itinerary and planned activities with a RiverStone Health nurse. And you can receive the recommended destination-specific vaccines. The nurse will provide printed information on malaria, travelers' diarrhea and other travel health tips to take with you.

It's important to make the appointment at least 4-6 weeks before traveling because some vaccines require more than one dose and a waiting period between doses. Appointments are available weekdays by calling 406-247-3382.

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