

Immunization

Don't Leave Home Without It!

(And we don't mean your credit card!)

Sobel Family Medicine & Physical Therapy does provide immunizations for the prevention of infectious diseases during foreign travel. We administer all types of immunization shots including yellow fever.

Patients often ask us for advice on precautions for traveling abroad.

Treatment of diarrhea and prevention of malaria are the two most common problems. Legal requirements for entry into another country and the possible diseases that may be encountered vary. The *Center for Disease Control* (CDC) in Atlanta is responsible for keeping current on such issues nationally, information can be obtained by calling the **Center for Disease Control (CDC), Atlanta at 1-404-332-4559.**

Travelers' Diarrhea

The most common cause is an infection with *E. Coli* bacteria. This condition is self-limited and only lasts for several days. *Salmonella*, *Shigella*, *Campylobacter*, parasites, and viruses can also occur. In areas of poor hygiene, you should avoid foods that are not steaming hot, raw vegetables, fruit that you have not peeled yourself, tap water, and ice.

Prevention: Recent recommendations no longer try to prevent infection, but rather treat the condition as soon as it occurs.

When prophylaxis antibiotics are indicated, a daily dose of **Cipro** is recommended. These can only be obtained by prescription through your physician. **Pepto-Bismol** can also prevent diarrhea. Two tablets four times daily with meals and at bedtime is the recommended dosage, but can produce side effects (turning the tongue and stool black, and/or ringing in the ears). People who cannot take aspirin should avoid **Pepto-Bismol**, and it should not be taken for more than three weeks at a time.

Treatment: If diarrhea occurs, rehydration is important. Your body will lose electrolytes and, therefore, replacement with drinks like *Gatorade* or other re-hydration solutions is advisable.

Imodium may be taken as needed up to 8 pills per day. For more severe cases, antibiotics will usually be effective. **Bactrim, Cipro, or Floxin** are the best choices since they are effective on resistant strains of bacteria.

Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A occurs by contact with infected feces, either through direct person to person, through water, supplies contaminated with human sewage, or through contaminated food, such as raw shellfish drawn from polluted waters. In adults, a primary dose is given initially, then a booster 6 to 12 months later. In those 2 to 18 years of age, an initial dose is followed by a dose in one

month and then a booster at 6 to 12 months later.

Areas where the infection is present include, but are not limited to, Africa, Asia (except Japan), the Mediterranean basin, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Central and South America, Mexico, and the Caribbean.

Hepatitis B

If traveling to **Southeast Asia or Africa**, vaccination is necessary for medical personnel or for people who expect to have sexual contacts, receive medical or dental care, or stay for more than six months.

Japanese Encephalitis

It is not recommended for all travelers to Asia. This disease is a tick or mosquito-borne infection which can lead to encephalitis. It is offered to persons spending a month or longer in endemic areas during the months of May to September. It is a series of three doses given over 30 days and is good for three years.

Measles

If you were born in **1957 or later**, have not received two prior immunizations (after your first birthday), and do not have a physician-documented history of measles or laboratory evidence of immunity, you should receive a single dose of measles vaccine before traveling anywhere (at least two weeks

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before or three months after immune globulin is administered).

Meningitis

Meningococcal vaccine is recommended only for travelers going to areas where epidemics are occurring. Epidemics are common in **sub-Saharan Africa** from December to June and also in northern **India and Nepal**. **Saudi Arabia** requires a certificate of immunization for pilgrims to Mecca.

Polio

Adults traveling to tropical or developing countries who have not previously been immunized against polio should receive a primary series of inactivated polio vaccine. If protection is needed within four weeks, a single dose of **eIPV** is advisable. Un-immunized children should receive a primary series of Oral Polio Vaccine.

Cholera

Is an acute bacterial infection of the intestinal system. Cholera is acquired by ingestion of contaminated food or water.

Travelers to cholera-infected areas are advised to take appropriate food and beverage precautions, including the avoidance of uncooked food, especially fish and shellfish, and peeling fruits themselves. Carbonated bottled water and carbonate soft drinks are usually safe.

Vaccination against cholera is on a country by country basis. A single dose of vaccination is sufficient for entry into a country that has an outbreak of cholera. The completed primary series (two doses given at least one week apart) is suggested for special high-risk groups that work and live in infected areas under inadequate sanitary conditions.

Typhoid

Is an acute, life-threatening illness caused by *Salmonella typhi*. Risk is greatest for travelers to the India, Asia Africa and Latin America who will have exposure to contaminated food and drink. Two vaccines are available in the United States.

1. Vivotif Berna which is a live-attenuated vaccine
2. Typhim Vi which is administered in shot form.

Yellow Fever

Is a viral disease found in parts of Africa and South America. It is transmitted to human by mosquito bite. Some countries require a Yellow Fever Vaccination for all travelers, while others only require a vaccination if a traveler is coming from either areas infected with yellow fever or areas where yellow fever transmission has occurred called Endemic areas. The endemic areas are found in tropical South America and Africa.

If your travel plans include traveling to or from a South American or African country that is infected with yellow fever or is located in areas where yellow fever transmission has occurred, then a yellow fever vaccination is recommended.

Yellow fever vaccination is a one-dose shot and is good for ten years. It may be administered to adults and children over 9 months of age. Persons severely allergic to eggs should not be given the vaccine.

Rabies

Immunization against rabies is recommended for travelers with an occupational risk (i.e., animal workers) or those traveling for long periods in endemic areas.

Malaria

Mefloquine (Lariam) is the drug of choice in most areas due to the disease's resistance to **chloroquine**. **Chloroquine** can still be used in **Central America** (west of the **Panama Canal Zone**), **Mexico, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and parts of the Mideast (including Egypt, Syria, and Iraq)**.

In all malarious areas, mosquito precautions are advisable. Insect repellents, netting, clothing with long sleeves, and long pants are necessary especially during evening hours.