

Australia's general practice immunisation newsletter

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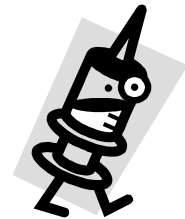
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Travel Vaccine special!



With many people preparing for trips overseas during the Christmas holidays, now is the time to remind them about the importance of immunisation. Below are some tips and useful information.

Vaccinations and health checks

It is important to encourage travellers to make an appointment with their doctor or travel clinic to have a basic check-up and find out if any vaccinations or health checks are required **at least 6-12 weeks before** they depart. It is important that travellers discuss their personal travel plans with a doctor so they can determine the correct vaccinations needed for their trip.

Some tips to remember:

- Vaccines are not perfect. New vaccines are constantly being released but diseases continue to evolve
- some vaccines require a long period to take effect, but it is never too late to vaccinate
- health risks within a country can vary in different localities and local authorities may be slow to announce outbreaks of disease

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Information contained within this newsletter is intended to inform you on immunisation issues with a national perspective. As such, it is possible that some references will require adjustment to be made specifically accurate for service providers in each individual State or Territory jurisdiction. For further clarification, contact your SBO Immunisation Coordinator or jurisdiction Health Department. AGPN acknowledges the financial support of the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

- new diseases, such as SARS, can appear suddenly. Check out the [latest travel advice](#) for your destination before you depart and while travelling so you can ensure you have the latest information
- common infections contracted by travellers include those which follow eating or drinking contaminated food or water. Find out whether tap water and local food is safe to consume before you depart
- there are a number of mosquito-borne illnesses you can contract while overseas particularly in tropical areas. Be sure to take measures to avoid being bitten such as wearing light coloured, loose fitting clothing that covers your arms and legs, regularly applying an appropriate insect repellent and staying in mosquito proof accommodation.

The above information has been sourced from www.smarttraveller.gov.au

Measles

There are still extensive measles epidemics occurring overseas often in the more "civilized" parts of the world where people don't normally think of the need for travel vaccines. Japan and Ireland, for example have recently had measles at epidemic levels. It is always good to check MMR status of prospective travellers. Those people born on or after 1/1/1966 should have documented evidence of two doses of MMR or a positive measles titre as a result of having the disease. If not it is a good idea to give an MMR vaccine before they travel. Personal histories can be unreliable as any rash with a fever may have been labelled "measles". Those born before 1966 would usually have come in contact with the disease and would therefore show a positive result to a serology test.

Returning to 'home' countries

Australia is a very multicultural country – we have many people who have immigrated here as well as many students who have come to further their studies at our universities. The summer holidays are a time that many of these people return to their 'home' countries. These people often assume they are immune to all the bugs in their home areas so tend not to see their doctor to ask for travel vaccines and medications.



A disproportionate number of reported occurrences of vaccine-preventable diseases (e.g. typhoid, malaria) are from people who have visited their birth places or visited relatives. Sometimes it is the Australian born children who are affected. People assume that "familiar" risks are low risk and forget that the partial immunity that you develop with repeated exposure fades fairly rapidly.

It is therefore important that we remind these travellers to check with their GP for any tests, vaccines or medications that are available to ensure they stay healthy both on their trip and when they return.

Helpful websites

Here are some helpful websites to refer GPs, Nurses and patients to when planning an overseas trip:

- www.smarttraveller.gov.au – the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's website for Australians travelling overseas.

- www.traveldoctor.com.au - the Travel Doctor website provides vaccination advice, travel health advice, clinic details and current health alerts for overseas travel for travellers as well as latest news and resources for health professionals.
- www.travelclinic.com.au - vaccination, immunisation, malaria and gastro prevention information
- www.welltogo.com.au - the Travel Health Advisory Group's website
- www.who.int/ith/en - the United Nations specialised health agency
- wwwn.cdc.gov/travel - the principal agency in the United States government for protecting health and safety
- www.travellingwell.com.au - the 'must have' guide to a safe and healthy journey
- www.tropical.umn.edu/TTM/VFR/index.htm - travel health information sheets in many different languages

HPV reminders

18 – 26 is a prime age for females wanting to travel. Many will organise to have health checks and vaccinations prior to departure. We recommend that you use this opportunity to check their HPV immunisation status and offer it to those who have not had it yet.

Remember that the funded HPV vaccine for those 18 – 26 year old finishes 30 June 2009 and they may not be back from their travels in time!



Information on new arrivals to the country

This settler database produced by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship has information useful for identifying CALD populations. The information includes the age group and country of birth that are likely to have young children or the number of children from particular countries. This can be very useful in determining groups, areas, practices that need to be targeted for help with immunization information, translation or simply encouragement to make sure that people are aware of the health services available in their area. <http://www.settlement.immi.gov.au/settlement/enterSelectReport.do> You can create reports for your state/territory by year, country of birth, age group and so on.

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Translation Services

The Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) National provides a 24 hour a day, seven days a week telephone interpreting service to all states and territories in Australia. It provides services in over 120 languages and dialects.

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship, through (TIS), provides a fee-free interpreting service to Doctors and Specialists if they are in private practice providing services, claimable under Medicare, to patients who do not speak English and are permanent residents.

TIS National has established priority telephone lines for emergency service organisations and medical practitioners in general practice. When contacted, these lines assume priority within the Call-Centre queue.

Call TIS National on 131 450 for the cost of a local call

Doctor's Priority Line - 1300 131 450

For more information visit the following website http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/help-with-english/help_with_translating/english-speakers/doctors-priority.htm

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NICS Evidence into Action prize

A NICS Evidence into Action prize, which includes prize-money of \$1,000, is being offered to Divisions of General Practice to encourage participation in influenza immunisation programs that will:

- Raise awareness of this important evidence-practice gap
- Support health professionals understand and overcome barriers to increase influenza immunisation rates
- Initiate and support activities that promote successful approaches to increasing influenza immunisation rates, and
- Integrates the routine uptake of evidence into systems established to improve quality and accountability in the area of influenza immunisation.

The winning submission will receive their award and be invited to present their work at the 2008 AGPN Immunisation workshop.

For more information or to apply for this fantastic prize, simply download and complete the submission form from

<http://www.agpn.com.au/site/index.cfm?display=1813&filter=i&leca=63&did=40661304#NICS>

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Name changes for Divisions – a final reminder!!

The Department of Health and Ageing is in the process of amending the regulation governing the information available to divisions with respect to the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register. The Department needs to have accurate names on the regulation and as many have recently changed or are in the process of changing their names, it is important to register this with DoHA. This involves -

Amendments to: *Health Insurance Regulations 1975 - Schedule 1A*

Divisions of General Practice to which information in the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register may be given

Can you please forward all name changes to Helen Moore at hmoore@agpn.com.au or Leah Parker at lparker@agpn.com.au as soon as possible, so these changes can be forwarded to the Department of Health and Ageing to make the necessary amendments to the above legislation.