



International Travel Immunizations

by Leslie Davis, RN

As the lure and affordability of international travel increases, the health department reminds travelers to think early about immunizations. Many vaccines take time to build the body's immunity to disease, and some vaccinations must be given in a series over a period of days or weeks.

Ideally, an appointment should be made with a health care provider at least 4 – 6 weeks before traveling, in order to allow the traveler time to receive recommended and required vaccinations. If traveling in less than four weeks, adults are still encouraged to talk to a health care provider, or contact the health department. There may be time to still receive some vaccinations as well as information about how to stay healthy while traveling.

Travelers are encouraged to consider three types of immunizations—routine, required and recommended.

- **Routine immunizations** are generally given to infants and children. These immunizations protect against diseases like polio, measles, mumps, rubella (MMR), diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus (DPT), Hepatitis B, Hepatitis A and chickenpox. Adults should also receive routine immunizations. One example is the tetanus diphtheria (Td) booster, which adults should get every 10 years. Routine vaccinations protect against a number of diseases – some are rarely seen in the U.S., but are still common in other parts of the world.
- **Required immunizations** are required by some countries' governments in order for a traveler to be allowed into their country. Under International Health Regulations, governments may require proof of yellow fever vaccination for individuals entering their country. There are also vaccination requirements for people traveling to Mecca for the annual Hajj.
- **Recommended vaccinations** are those that will help protect travelers from illnesses that are present in other parts of the world, and will prevent infectious diseases from coming back into the United States.

The Springfield Greene County Health Department offers international travel vaccinations, including the yellow fever vaccine, for a reasonable fee. Travelers can contact the health department's Westside Public Health Center, located at 660 S Scenic in Springfield, by calling 417-874-1220.

Providing immunizations that support safe and healthy travel is just one way the health department is helping people live longer, happier, healthier lives. ■