

# Shots for Travel

## Do I need shots before I travel?

Before you travel, make sure you are up to date on all routine shots. These include tetanus, pertussis, polio, measles, and mumps. It is also good to have a flu shot if you are traveling to a part of the world where it is flu season. Depending on your age and health, you may also need a pneumococcal shot to protect against pneumococcal disease.

When you travel to foreign countries, you may be exposed to other infections. Many of these illnesses can be prevented with vaccines or medicines. At least 2 months before you travel, tell your healthcare provider where you plan to travel. Some vaccines need to be started a month before you leave. Your provider will let you know what shots or medicines you need. This decision will be based on:

- The places you plan to visit
- Your age, medical history, and health
- Your exposure risk, for example, whether you will be in rural areas where there are more likely to be mosquitos

Also find out which countries require proof of vaccination before they will let you visit.

## What special shots or medicines might I need before I travel?

More than a dozen vaccines are available to prevent diseases you might be exposed to during travel to other parts of the world. For example, you might need vaccines against:

- Hepatitis A and B (If you haven't already had these shots, you may need to start getting them at least 6 months before you travel.)
- Chickenpox
- Pneumonia
- Typhoid fever
- Yellow fever
- Meningitis
- Japanese encephalitis
- Rabies

This is just a partial list. It depends on where you are traveling and what outbreaks there are when you travel.

If you are going to a part of the world where malaria is common, such as Africa, Asia, or South America, you may need to take medicine to prevent malaria. Malaria is a serious, sometimes fatal, disease caused by a parasite. It causes fever and flulike illness. It may also cause anemia and jaundice (yellow coloring of the skin and eyes). It is usually spread by mosquito bites. Your healthcare provider may prescribe a medicine that you will start taking up to 2 weeks before you

leave. You will keep taking the medicine while you travel in the risk area and up to 4 weeks after you leave the area.

## **How can I get up-to-date information for the places I plan to visit?**

Check with your healthcare provider or your local health department for information. You can also get detailed, up-to-date travel advice for specific countries and diseases from:

- A travel health clinic
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) via the Traveler's Health hotline at 1-877-FYI-TRIP or online at <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/>

If you are pregnant, breast-feeding, or traveling with young children, be sure to ask about or look up specific information about your situation.

A number of other travel medicine sites can be found on the Web, such as:

- Travel Health Online: <http://www.tripprep.com>
- World Health Organization: <http://www.who.int/ith/en/>

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