

Health Tips for the Traveler (Part 2) *By Paul Edgecomb, MD*

Last month, I discussed the common diseases – Traveler’s Diarrhea, Tetanus, MMR, Influenza. This time, let’s investigate the tropical diseases. Once again, I recommend reviewing the web-site run by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) at www.cdc.gov/travel; it is very helpful in determining which vaccines you need.

Hepatitis A: Important for many tropical countries; Hepatitis A is spread by contaminated food and water. You can get one dose (an injected vaccine) prior to traveling for temporary immunity. A second dose taken six months later provides life-long immunity.

Typhoid: Important for SOME tropical countries; there’s an oral vaccine that most people prefer, which gives five years of immunity.

Yellow Fever: Important for SOME tropical countries; it’s even REQUIRED by some. This vaccine is more difficult to

get, since there’s a special license required to give it. The yellow fever vaccine can be obtained at the Maricopa County Department of Health, most travel clinics and a few licensed Safeway pharmacies.

Malaria: This is the most complicated disease to prevent as many tropical countries have a malaria risk but it differs depending on the specific part of the country as well as the time of year. There is no vaccine, but there are oral medications that reduce the risk of getting Malaria. There are many different types of Malaria which varies the preventive treatment from country to country. The medications need to be started before you leave for your trip and taken during the entire stay in Malaria-prone areas, and for several days after. When traveling abroad, it’s very important to do your research. Guard against the avoidable diseases and enjoy your trip.

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