



## Travel with care

When visiting a foreign country or travelling locally, there are life-threatening diseases that you should be aware of, such as malaria, yellow fever and the possibility of food poisoning and diarrhoea.

Our travel health doctors will advise you on the prevention and treatment of such conditions.

[www.intercare.co.za](http://www.intercare.co.za)



# Altitude Sickness

**A useful rule of thumb is: if you feel unwell at altitude, it is altitude sickness unless you have other symptoms not related to AMS (such as diarrhoea).**

## Early and Advanced Symptoms

- headache
- appetite loss
- fatigue
- dizziness
- vivid dreams / poor sleep

## PLUS one or more of:

- shortness of breath especially at rest
- dry cough
- low grade fever
- rapid pulse, nausea & vomiting, lack of co-ordination, confusion and coma

## Prevention

- expect AMS if ascent is more than 50m per day
- climb high, sleep low
- acclimatise if possible
- use appropriate medication

## Three Golden Rules

- if you feel unwell at altitude, it is altitude sickness unless proven otherwise
- never ascend with symptoms of AMS
- if you are getting worse, descend at once

# Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)

**It is the occurrence of a blood clot in the veins of the legs with the possible complication of the clot spreading to the lungs (pulmonary embolus) which can be life threatening. Long distance travel increases the risk of venous thrombosis, irrespective of the mode of travel. It occurs in long haul travellers.**

## What causes it?

Prolonged immobility in a confined space.

## Why is it dangerous?

If a fragment of clot breaks off, it will travel through the circulation and lodge in the lungs. This can cause fatal cardiogenic shock or severe irregular heart beat (arrhythmia) which can be life threatening.

## What are the symptoms of DVT?

Painful swelling in the calf extending to include the foot and ankle. It might be difficult to differentiate this from an acute muscle sprain.

If the clot spreads to the lungs the symptoms might not be very specific but can include:

- nonspecific chest pain
- chest pain on breathing
- coughing up blood
- difficulty breathing
- severe distress



## Do

- move about the aircraft regularly
- avoid restrictive clothing around the legs and waist
- flex and relax leg muscles while seated
- remain well hydrated
- for those who are at increased risk, there is specific medication that can be used; consult your travel medical practitioner



## Don't

- drink a lot of tea, coffee or alcohol
- aspirin is not recommended.

# Diving & Flying

**The risk of developing decompression sickness (DCS) is increased by flying after a dive.**

## Prevention

Divers should avoid flying above 2000 feet (610 meters) in an unpressurised aircraft or in a commercial aircraft for a minimum of 12 hours after surfacing from a single no-compression dive or after 18 hours following repetitive dives or multiple days of diving.

These recommended preflight surface intervals do not guarantee avoidance of DCS. Longer surface intervals decrease the risk.

# Influenza

Influenza is more likely to occur whilst travelling. A different vaccine is required for travels to the Northern and Southern hemispheres. These vaccines need to be boosted annually.

# Immunisations

Consult your travel clinic for appropriate immunisations before leaving home. Consideration should be given to a tetanus booster, polio vaccination, influenza vaccination and other immunisations depending on your destination and planned activities.

# Malaria

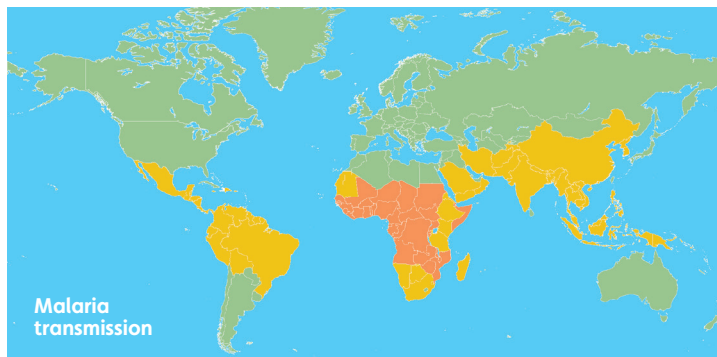
**Malaria is a dangerous infection that occurs when an infected Anopheles mosquito bites a person and injects malaria parasites into the blood.**

Symptoms may develop as soon as seven days after arrival, or as long as nine months after leaving a malarious area: they are often deceptively mild in the initial stages.

## What do you feel when you're getting malaria?

- tiredness
- headache
- cough
- fever
- diarrhoea
- a generalised body ache

Remember that these symptoms may not be dramatic, and can easily be mistaken for an attack of influenza or similar non life threatening illness.



## Do

- consult a travel clinic about the risk of malaria in the area you are travelling to
- protect yourself against night time mosquito bites
- apply DEET based insect repellent to exposed skin
- wear long sleeved clothing and long pants if you are outdoors at night
- mosquito nets should be used if your bedroom is not screened or air conditioned
- spray insecticide or burn a coil in your bedroom or tent before going to bed.

# Rabies

**Rabies is transmitted by the bite of an infected animal. In most instances the infected animal is a dog, but can include other animals such as monkeys, cats and bats.**



**Pre-travel immunisation is recommended for travellers likely to be at risk.**

## **Pre-travel vaccination schedule:**

This comprises of three injections, given on day 0, 7, and 28. Consult your travel health practitioner on advice as to whether you should be immunised against rabies.

There are two concerns following any bite: infection and rabies. Any animal bite should be washed with water for 5–10 minutes with an antiseptic such as Betadine, which should be applied to the wound and then dressed. The wound is rarely stitched initially due to risk of infection.



**If you are in a rabies endemic country and are bitten by a mammal you will need a post-bite rabies vaccine as soon as possible. Depending on where you are this could mean emergency evacuation to a facility that can treat you. Time is of the essence as this is your only chance to save your life.**

## **The standard post-bite regime is as follows:**

- initial vaccination on the day of the bite, or as soon as possible thereafter
- if you have been previously vaccinated, you will receive a dose on day 0 and day 3; and nothing further
- if you have not been previously vaccinated, 5 doses of rabies vaccine are required, given on day 0, 3, 7, 17 and 28
- human rabies immune globulin (HRIG) must also be given, preferably on the day of the bite. The HRIG is given directly into the wound and its purpose is to neutralise the virus while the vaccine takes effect
- chloroquine, alcohol and immune suppressive drugs should be avoided during the course of rabies vaccinations as they interfere with the vaccine

# Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Travellers are at increased risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases including HIV, Hepatitis B, HPV (human papillomavirus) infection. Always practice safe sex – this includes the use of a condom.

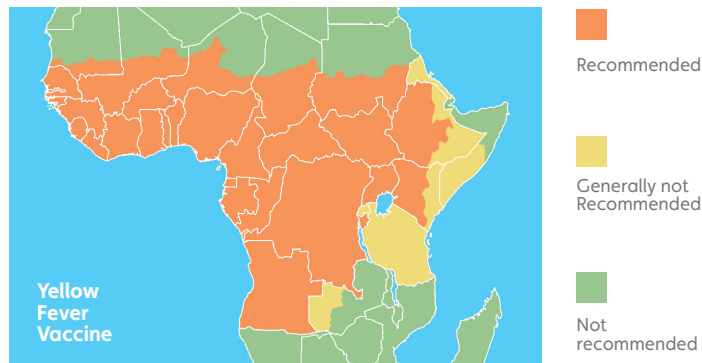
# Travel Insurance

In most cases the cost of medical treatment in other countries is far higher than at home, which makes travel insurance a necessity for all travellers. Don't leave home without it!



# Yellow Fever

- yellow fever is transmitted by the bite of mosquitoes that bite during daylight hours
- transmission occurs at altitudes of up to 2500 meters. The yellow fever virus occurs in some tropical areas of Africa and Central and South America
- the number of epidemics has increased since the early 1980s
- travellers are at risk in all areas where yellow fever is endemic
- the risk is greatest for visitors who enter forest and jungle areas
- prevention is by means of vaccination and in some countries yellow fever vaccination is mandatory for visitors
- avoid mosquito bites during the day as well as at night



## Food & Water Borne Infections

Disease	Prevention	Handy Hints
Polio, Hepatitis A, Typhoid	Effective vaccines available	Wash hands before eating
Cholera	Oral vaccine useful in selected individuals and circumstances	
Bacterial dysentery	No vaccines yet – food and water hygiene essential	Boil or treat water before drinking
Various viruses and bacteria causing gastroenteritis		
Amoebic dysentery and liver abscessiasis	No vaccine yet – beware uncooked fruit and vegetables, especially salads	Leave water to stand for 48 hours before washing or consuming
Schistosomiasis (Bilharzia)	Repellents containing DEET may be useful as a preventative if applied before swimming	Cook it, peel it, boil it or forget it!
Giardiasis and other parasitic infection	No vaccines yet – food and water hygiene essential	



## Intercare offers the following services

- Pre & post travel related medical services
- Travel vaccinations
- Yellow Fever vaccinations & record cards
- Malaria prophylaxis & other travel medication
- Advice on the prevention & treatment of possible life-threatening diseases while travelling

If possible, visit your Intercare Travel Health Centre at least six weeks before your intended trip. Remember to also check your dental health – a broken or carious tooth can ruin that business meeting or well-deserved holiday.

Learn more about Intercare Travel Health

[www.intercare.co.za](http://www.intercare.co.za)

