

General Information for Travellers

The remit of NaTHNaC is '*to protect the health of British travellers*'. That is why we strongly encourage travellers to discuss their travel plans with their GP, practice nurse or private travel clinic.

It is during this discussion that hazards specific to your destination can be identified, and advice on avoiding them can be given.

Why do I need to go for pre travel health advice?

A pre travel consultation does not just involve injections. In fact the majority of hazards faced by travellers abroad are not prevented by vaccines. The pre travel consultation will identify these hazards and provide you with the opportunity to discuss how these risks can be reduced. Examples include

- Traveller's diarrhoea
- Food and water hygiene
- Insect bite avoidance
- Traveller's thrombosis (DVT)
- Travel insurance

The benefits of a pre travel consultation are

- Up to date verbal and written advice on a range of travel health issues
- Information about recent disease outbreaks
- Travel health vaccinations, malaria tablets and other medications

Which travellers should go for a pre travel consultation?

Anyone planning a trip outside of Western Europe, the States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, should discuss their travel plans with a health professional.

Generally the risk of infectious disease is greater in resource poor countries; however certain advice will be applicable to all travellers regardless of their destination. For example travellers to Mediterranean resorts should still protect themselves against insect bites, the damaging rays of the sun, and avoid risky behaviour.

There are certain travellers in whom a pre travel consultation is particularly important, these include

- Babies and young children
- The elderly
- Pregnant or breastfeeding women
- Those with pre-existing medical conditions

Travel advice for these individuals should be specifically tailored to their needs.

How long before I travel should I seek advice?

As a general rule, 6-8 weeks prior to travel will give ample time for all necessary vaccines to be completed.

For those planning longer trips into remote areas, courses of vaccines may be recommended which can take several weeks to complete.

It is still worth seeking health advice even at the last minute, as there are some vaccines that can be given at short notice, it is always worth taking malaria tablets for last minute travel, and travellers will benefit from the preventative advice.

What can I expect at the pre travel consultation?

The nurse or doctor will want to make a “risk assessment.” This will identify hazards related to your destination and planned activities, and will provide you with individualised advice. In order to make a risk assessment you will be asked, during your first visit, for detailed information regarding you and your trip. For example

- Personal details including age
- Destination
- Departure date
- Length of stay
- Planned activities
- Type of accommodation
- Previous vaccinations received
- Medical history

This process can appear excessive, but is vital in order to tailor the advice to your specific needs.

Following the risk assessment, the nurse or doctor will make recommendations on vaccines and malaria tablets that may be appropriate, as well as offer advice on other potential risks.

Where can I go for travel health advice?

Many GP surgeries operate a travel clinic, usually run by the practice nurse. Try to allow plenty of time to make an appointment, as surgeries are often very busy.

Alternatively, there are many specialist travel clinics around the country; these usually operate on a private basis.

Unfortunately, NaTHNaC are unable to provide travel advice directly to the public; however advice can be sought from the following telephone advice lines for the public

- Hospital for Tropical Diseases - 09061 337733 (Calls cost 50p per minute; calls from mobiles and some networks may be higher)
- Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine - 0906 701 0095 (Calls cost 50p per minute; calls from mobiles and some networks may be higher)
- Malaria Reference Laboratory - 09065 508908 (Calls are charged at £1 per minute)

A link to [yellow fever centres](#) in England can be found on the yellow fever homepage.