

Section 2

The Pre-Travel Consultation



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2.1 Introduction

The risk of illness and injury for those travelling overseas is well recognised. Approximately 8% of travellers require medical care during travel. Many more will experience illness such as travellers' diarrhoea. The primary aim of the pre-travel health consultation is to identify and reduce these risks by offering advice and informing travellers whilst promoting effective preventive measures. Advice which is accurate, achievable and tailored to the individual's travel plans and specific health needs, will increase compliance.

The pre-travel health consultation is a two step process:

- **Risk Assessment (2.2)** – identifies potential health risks and individuals who are at increased risk who may need special consideration.
- **Risk Management (2.3)** – provides advice and preventive strategies to reduce health risks, including tailored advice for those with special needs. [See Special Risks Section 3.](#)

Both steps are discussed in detail in this book. Some risks, however, are dynamic and change rapidly, for example disease outbreaks at specific destinations. In addition to this book, therefore, health professionals must also access up-to-date references and online resources during their travel health consultations to ensure the care and advice they offer is current and complete. Internet access is essential. [See Resource Guide: C – Sources of Specialist Advice.](#)

A guide to using this book in a travel health consultation is given in [Chart 2-1.](#)

Communication

Effective communication skills are necessary when conducting a pre-travel consultation. The aim is a two-way interactive dialogue which actively involves the traveller and encourages informed decision-making. Travel health consultations can be lengthy and adequate time is essential. Most travellers need a minimum of 20 minutes. Those with special risks usually require more detailed information and so will need longer.

There is a limit to the amount of knowledge travellers will retain, so written advice should be provided and the traveller should be directed to reliable online sources. [See Resource Guide: B – Resources for Travellers.](#)

Documentation

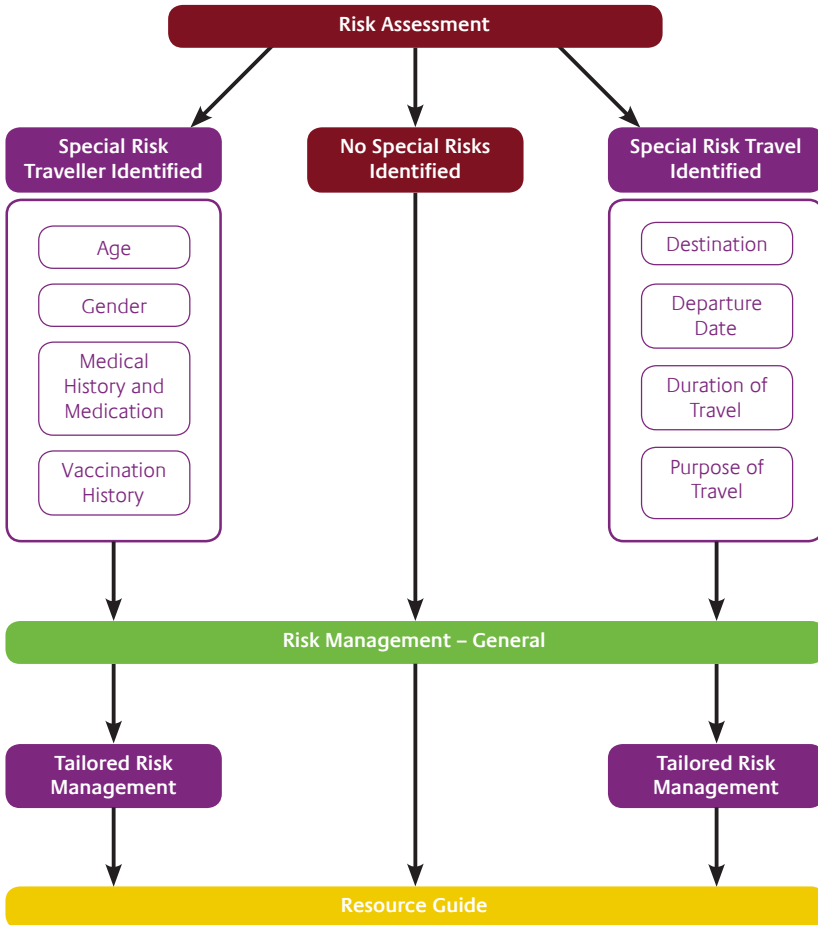
The travel health professional is responsible for careful documentation of all aspects of the pre-travel consultation, including vaccine records. [See Resource Guide: A3 1 – Key Resources.](#) These must be kept for a minimum of 10 years for an adult and 25 years for a child (or 8 years following a child's death). Each traveller should also be provided with a written record of any vaccinations given and, if applicable, a note of when future doses are due. [See Chart 2-3 in Risk Management Checklist.](#)

2.1 Introduction

Competence and Training

Travel health, like any specialty, requires a basic level of knowledge for safe and effective practice. Clear guidance is available from the Royal College of Nursing; see [Resource Guide: A31 – Key Resources](#). Specific travel health training, including certificate, diploma and masters level courses, is available in the UK; see [Resource Guide: 1.1.1](#). NaTHNaC and Health Protection Scotland provide training specifically about yellow fever. Travel health professionals should also be aware of their limitations and know when and how to seek specialist advice. See [Resource Guide: C – Sources of Specialist Advice](#).

Chart 2-1. Using this book in a travel health consultation



2.2 Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is fundamental to pre-travel health consultation. It is a two-step process of gathering information firstly about the traveller and secondly about their trip. Accurate risk assessment can be used to guide risk management advice and strategies. All travellers should be given the advice included in the [Risk Management Section 2.3](#) of this book. Risk assessment should also identify travellers with special risks; see [Box 2-1](#). These travellers need additional, tailored, risk management advice; see [Special Risks Section 3](#).

In order to emphasise the most important risks for the individual traveller, health professionals must prioritise advice on risk management and address the priorities in the time available.

Information needed for effective risk evaluation can be gathered by asking travellers to complete a risk assessment form prior to their appointment and by verifying the information with the traveller during the consultation. See [Chart 2-2. Risk Assessment Form](#).

Careful documentation of the pre-travel health consultation is essential.

Box 2-1. Special Risk Identifiers

Special Risk Traveller (3.1)

- **Age**
 - Child (See 3.1.2)
 - Older age (See 3.1.11)
- **Gender**
 - Women (See 3.1.17)
 - Pre-conception, pregnancy and breastfeeding (See 3.1.12)
- **Medical history and medication**
 - Allergies (for vaccine allergies see 2.4)
 - Cardiovascular and cerebrovascular disease (See 3.1.1)
 - Diabetes (See 3.1.3)
 - Disability (See 3.1.4)
 - Gastrointestinal conditions (See 3.1.5)
 - Haematological conditions (See 3.1.6)
 - Hepatic conditions (See 3.1.7)
 - HIV/AIDS (See 3.1.8)
 - Immunocompromised (See 3.1.9)
 - Neurological conditions, e.g. epilepsy (See 3.1.10)
 - Psychological conditions, e.g. depression (See 3.1.13)
 - Renal conditions (See 3.1.14)
 - Respiratory conditions (See 3.1.15)
 - Rheumatological conditions (See 3.1.16)
- **Vaccination history**
 - Principles of vaccinations (See 2.4)

Special Risk Travel (3.2)

- **Destination**
 - Destination-specific advice and disease outbreak information should be found online, e.g. NaTHNaC Country Information Pages¹ www.nathnac.org
 - Altitude (See 3.2.2)
- **Departure date**
 - Last minute travel (See 3.2.6)
- **Duration of stay**
 - Long-term (See 3.2.7) including backpacker/expatriate/volunteer/work
- **Purpose of visit**
 - Adventure (See 3.2.1)
 - Cruise (See 3.2.3)
 - Diving (See 3.2.4)
 - Healthcare worker (See 3.2.5)
 - Medical tourism (See 3.2.8)
 - Natural disasters (See 3.2.9)
 - Pilgrimage (See 3.2.10)
 - Visiting friends and relatives (See 3.2.11)

1 Alternatively see Travax <http://www.travax.nhs.uk/> or Fit for Travel <http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/>

2.2 Risk Assessment

Chart 2-2. Risk Assessment Form











Note for Health Professionals: Special Risk Identifiers highlighted in **BLACK and BOLD** below. See Special Risks Section 3.

For completion by the traveller:		All information is treated as confidential.	
Name:		Date of birth:	
Address:		Telephone:	Email:
Travel Details (Check atlas and country-specific online resources, e.g. www.nathnac.org ¹)			
Date of travel:		Total length of travel:	
Country	Region	Length of stay	
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
Do you have travel health insurance? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Purpose of trip (circle all that apply) Tourism Business (< 1 month)			
Adventure Cruise Diving Healthcare worker Long-term (backpacker/expatriate/volunteer/work)			
Medical tourism Natural disasters Pilgrimage Visiting friends & relatives (VFRs)			
Medical History			
Are you well today? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Do you take any medicines/pills? (Prescribed/self-treatment/over-the-counter, including contraception). Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Please list all medication:			
Do any of the following apply to you:			
	Yes	No	Details
Allergies (including food, latex, medication etc.)			
Anaemia			
Bleeding/clotting disorders (including deep vein thrombosis)			
Heart disease (e.g. angina, high blood pressure)			
Diabetes			
Disability			
Epilepsy/seizures			
Gastrointestinal (stomach) complaints			
Liver problems			
HIV/AIDS			
Immune system condition			
Mental health issues (including anxiety, depression)			
Neurological (nervous system) illness			
Kidney problems			
Respiratory (lung) disease			
Rheumatology (joint) conditions			
Spleen problems			
Any other conditions			
Women only: Date of last period?			
Are you pregnant, breastfeeding or planning pregnancy whilst travelling? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			

1 Alternatively see Travax <http://www.travax.nhs.uk/> or Fit for Travel <http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/>

2.3 Risk Management

Chart 2-3. Risk Management Checklist

For Health Professional Use		
	Discussed (✓)	Comments
 1. Medical Preparation		
 2. Journey Risks		
 3. Safety Risks		
 4. Environmental Risks		
 5. Food and Water-borne Risks		
 6. Vector-borne Risks		
 7. Air-borne Risks		
 8. Sexual Health and Blood-borne Viral Risks		
 9. Skin Health		
 10. Psychological Health		



Travel vaccine/s	Date(s) received	Vaccine discussed/recommended	Administration details: date, immunisation site, manufacturer, batch number and administrator (e.g. initials)
BCG Mantoux			
Cholera			
Diphtheria/Tetanus/Polio			
Hepatitis A			
Hepatitis B			
Hepatitis A/B			
Hepatitis A/typhoid			
Japanese encephalitis			
Influenza			
Meningitis ACWY			
MMR			
Rabies			
TBE			
Typhoid			
Yellow fever			
Other			
Antimalarials		✓	Comments
Atovaquone/proguanil			
Chloroquine			
Doxycycline			
Mefloquine			
Proguanil			
Bite avoidance only			
Emergency standby			
Other Advice			

2.3 Risk Management

Guide to Icons

Medical Preparation



Journey Risks



Safety Risks



Environmental Risks



Food and Water-borne Risks



Vector-borne Risks



Air-borne Risks



Sexual Health and Blood-borne Viral Risks



Skin Health



Psychological Health

