



Travel Health Alert



1st August 2018

Haiti

217 probable cases of diphtheria have been reported, Jan-Jul 18. The southern department of Ouest is most affected.

Venezuela

An outbreak of diphtheria which started in Bolivar State in 2016 has spread to 21 states with more than 1,900 suspected cases (at least 164 deaths) recorded, as of Jul 18. 540 cases (44 deaths) have been reported, Jan-May 18.

Diphtheria is a bacterial infection affecting the respiratory tract usually spread through respiratory droplets such as coughing. The risk is increased in conditions of overcrowding and poor hygiene. It can cause serious throat symptoms and also affect the skin. Vaccination is part of the standard UK immunisation schedule and boosters are given in combination with tetanus and polio.

Democratic Republic of Congo

The WHO have declared that the Ebola outbreak has now been contained with no new cases reported since the end of May 18. 54 cases (33 deaths) were reported from Bikoro, Iboko and Wangata in Equateur Province (NW). Sporadic outbreaks are reported in DRC.

Ebola is a serious viral infection which is often fatal causing excess bleeding and organ failure. It is spread by direct contact with infected blood or bodily fluids of infected people or animals. Outbreaks have been linked to contact with infected bush meat or fruit bat saliva.

Costa Rica

A small outbreak of hepatitis A has been reported in the eastern sector of San José, Jul 18. 3 confirmed and 8 suspected cases have been recorded.

Hepatitis A is a viral infection which affects the liver and occasionally causes severe disease. It is usually spread by contaminated food and water. Symptoms include fever, digestive disturbance and jaundice. Effective hepatitis A vaccines are available and can be given on their own or in combination with hepatitis B or typhoid.



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Panama

Health officials have reported an increase in Hantavirus in Los Santos Province (S), with 49 cases (3 deaths) recorded, Jan-Jul 18. 23 cases were recorded in the same province during 2017. 1 confirmed and 1 suspected case were reported from Veraguas province (W), Sep 17.

Hantavirus is a viral disease which is primarily transmitted by contact with infected rodent excreta. The infection usually affects the lungs and kidneys. The risk to travellers is low.

Taiwan

Taiwan Centers for Disease Control have reported 31 cases of Japanese encephalitis, May-Jul 18. 19 cases were recorded nationally during 2017. The majority of cases are reported from southern and central areas and usually occur from May to October with peaks in June and July.

Japanese encephalitis is a viral infection affecting the nervous system spread by mosquitoes. There is no treatment and around a third of those who develop encephalitis will die. It is found in parts of Asia, in rural and peri-rural areas where there is a water source and vegetation. Climate change and manmade irrigation channels means there are breeding sites for mosquitoes year round.

Italy

An outbreak of Legionella has been reported in Bresso, Lombardy region (N), Jul 16. 26 cases (3 deaths) have been confirmed mainly in elderly residents. Investigations are underway to identify the source of infection.

Legionnaires' disease is a bacterial infection which can cause a life-threatening pneumonia. Outbreaks are often associated with communal water facilities such spas, showers and cooling towers.

Venezuela

1,613 confirmed cases (44 deaths) of measles have been reported, Jan-Jul 18. Media sources have also reported the deaths of 70 children from an indigenous tribe in a remote area of Delta Amacuro State (NE), Jan-Apr 18.

Measles is a viral infection which causes a red blotchy rash and occasionally more serious disease. 2 doses of the MMR vaccine are recommended to provide protection against the disease. The travel consultation is good opportunity to ensure that all travellers are in-date with their primary vaccinations.





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India

Media sources have reported over 100 cases of scrub typhus in Mizoram State (NE), July 18. A previous outbreak (47 cases) was reported in the same state, Nov 17-Jan 18.

Scrub typhus is an illness caused by a Rickettsia bacteria that is spread by mites on rodents. Symptoms vary but often include headache, fever and rashes. Travellers should minimize exposure by avoiding rodents and using insect repellents.

Switzerland

Media sources have reported 230 cases of tick-borne encephalitis, Jan-Jul 18. 257 cases were recorded, Jan-Nov 17.

Tick-borne relapsing fever is bacterial infection spread by 'soft ticks'. Symptoms include a relapsing fever, muscle/joint pain, headache, rash, vomiting and dizziness. It can be treated with antibiotics. Take steps to avoid tick bites.

Bahamas

Media sources have reported 25 confirmed cases of *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* infection in New Providence after consumption of unwashed conch, Jul 18.

Vibrio parahaemolyticus is a bacterial infection found in warm saltwater and can infect wounds. It can also be transmitted by ingesting raw seafood causing gastroenteritis. People with underlying medical conditions such as liver disease are more at risk of developing severe septicemia.

Romania

5 cases of West Nile fever have been reported in this transmission season, Jul 18. 66 cases (13 deaths) were reported, Aug-Nov 17.

Serbia

29 cases of West Nile virus have been reported this transmission season, Jul 18. 49 cases (2 deaths) were reported, Aug-Nov 17.

West Nile fever is a viral infection spread by the bite of mosquitoes. It usually causes flu-like symptoms, but can rarely cause fatal brain infection. The elderly are at higher risk of complications. There is no specific treatment.





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Other News:

China

China's second largest manufacturer of rabies vaccines have had their license revoked and vaccines recalled following a State Drug Administration inspection.



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