



Travel Health Alert



2nd January 2019

Malawi

A traveller from the UK has contracted African trypanosomiasis while volunteering in the Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve (N), Dec 18. A Dutch traveller has contracted the disease while on holiday in Malawi, Nov 18.

Zambia

1 confirmed case of African trypanosomiasis has been reported in a worker from the Lower Zambezi National Park (S), Dec 18. 1 case was reported in a tourist who visited South Luangwa National Park (E), Jan 18.

African trypanosomiasis (Sleeping Sickness) is spread by the bite of the tsetse fly. These are large black flies which are found in rural areas and are active during the daytime. They are attracted to moving objects (e.g. safari vehicles) and dark colours. They are not particularly affected by insect repellents, and can bite through lightweight clothing. A skin ulcer may occur at the site of the bite and swollen lymph nodes may appear. The disease can progress to affect the brain, causing confusion and poor coordination. The disease is fatal if left untreated.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

The outbreak of Ebola virus disease continues in North Kivu and Ituri provinces, (NW). 598 confirmed and probable cases (363 deaths) have been recorded, May-Dec 18. 52 healthcare workers have been infected (17 have died).

Response activities are being hampered by protests and insecurity.

Information for those travelling for humanitarian and aid work to areas affected by Ebola is available from PHE:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ebola-virus-disease-information-for-humanitarian-aid-workers>. 54 cases (33 deaths) were reported in the unrelated outbreak in Equateur Province (NW), Apr-May 18.

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.



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Madagascar

The Ministry of Health has declared an outbreak of measles, with more than 16,400 cases (39 deaths) reported across all 22 regions, Oct-Dec 18. Antananarivo-Renivohitra district is most affected. Vaccination campaigns have started.

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 provides a good opportunity to ensure that all travellers are in-date with their primary vaccinations.

Australia

Health officials have reported almost 800 cases of pertussis in one month in New South Wales, Oct 18. 170 cases have been notified in Tasmania, Aug-Nov 18. 75 cases were reported from the South West Region of Western Australia, Jan-May 18.

Pertussis (Whooping cough) is a highly infectious bacterial infection which affects the respiratory tract. Pertussis vaccines are given as part of the childhood immunisation schedule of many countries.

Mozambique

The WHO has reported 1 confirmed case of circulating vaccine-derived polio virus type 2 (cVDPV2) in Molumbo District, Zambezia province (C).

Polio is a viral infection which can sometimes cause long term paralysis. It is usually spread by contaminated food and water in areas with poor sanitation. Polio has been successfully eliminated from many countries. Vaccination is part of the standard UK immunisation schedule and boosters are given in combination with tetanus and diphtheria.

Dominican Republic

Media sources have reported 4 human deaths from rabies during 2018.





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Rabies is a viral infection spread by the saliva of infected animals. Human cases are usually due to dog bites but any mammals can be infected. Rabies is fatal once symptoms begin. Pre-exposure vaccinations are recommended for long-stay travellers; those remote from medical help (>24 hours) and animal handlers. All travellers must know how to treat a wound and seek prompt post-exposure vaccines if bitten/scratched.

Czech Republic

More than 690 cases of tick-borne encephalitis have been recorded, Jan-Nov 18. A report from 2016 stated that the Czech Republic reports the highest number of cases of tick-borne encephalitis in the EU.

Tick-borne encephalitis is a viral disease spread by the bite of infected ticks and less commonly through the consumption of unpasteurised dairy products. Symptoms include flu-like illness and neurological problems. It occurs across many parts of Europe and Asia. Ticks are found in forest clearings, long grass and hedgerows and are most active in the spring and summer months. Travellers to rural areas (e.g. hikers, campers, agricultural/forestry workers) should consider vaccination.

Pakistan

Health authorities have reported over 8,000 cases of typhoid fever in Sindh Province (SE), of which more than 5,200 cases are extensively drug-resistant (XDR), Nov 16-Dec 18. Cases have also been reported in travellers returning from Pakistan. The new strain is resistant to the antibiotics usually used to treat multi-drug resistant infections.

Typhoid fever is a bacterial infection usually spread by contaminated food and water. It can cause fever, headaches, digestive disturbances and less commonly, serious complications. Vaccination can be given alone or in combination with hepatitis A. An oral vaccine is also available but is not suitable for everyone.

Nigeria

3,902 suspected cases (33 deaths) of yellow fever have been reported across all states, Sep 17-Dec 18. A campaign to vaccinate 26.2 million people is in progress.



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Yellow fever is a viral disease, found in tropical regions of Africa and the Americas. It principally affects humans and monkeys, and is transmitted by the bite of an infected mosquito. The risk is highest in rural areas. 15-25% of those infected will develop severe disease with organ failure, jaundice and bleeding. An effective vaccine is available but may not be suitable for everyone. International regulations are in place to prevent the spread of the disease and as such the vaccine must be administered in a registered 'Yellow Fever Centre' and a certificate of vaccination issued.

Brazil

More than 7,500 cases of Zika virus have been reported, with Rio de Janeiro state reporting over 2,200 cases, Jan-Nov 18.

India

More than 280 cases of Zika virus have been reported from 3 states: Rajasthan (NW), Madhya Pradesh (C) and Gujarat State during 2018.

Mexico

More than 600 confirmed cases of Zika virus have been recorded, with Sonora (N) and Jalisco (SE) states reporting the highest numbers, Jan-Nov 18.

Zika virus (ZIKV) is transmitted by daytime biting mosquitoes and is similar to dengue fever. Symptoms include rash, conjunctivitis, muscle or joint pain. Neurological complications have been reported. There is consensus that ZIKV infection during pregnancy may cause some birth defects such as microcephaly. There is a low risk of sexual transmission of the disease. Countries/territories/areas with active or past Zika transmission have now been classified into 4 risk categories: high, moderate, low and very low, based on the current and potential epidemiological situation. These categories ensure travel advice is appropriate and proportionate to the defined ZIKV transmission risk. See current national advice from Public Health England for more details, including that for pregnant travellers, who are advised to postpone non-essential travel to high risk countries and also regarding condom use for preventing sexual transmission of the disease.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/zika-virus-zikv-clinical-and-travel-guidance>





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Other News

Acute Flaccid Paralysis

Health officials are reporting an increase in acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) cases both in the UK and in the USA. AFP can look similar to polio by causing weakness and floppiness in one or more limbs. It mainly affects children and can lead to long term consequences. Several of the cases in the UK have been linked to enteroviruses which can cause colds, coughs and diarrhoea. In the USA it is thought that some AFP cases may be related to West Nile virus. The illness remains rare with less than 2 children in a million affected.

Zambia

Media sources have reported that fake yellow fever certificates are readily obtainable in Lusaka. The WHO declared that Zambia is a yellow fever free zone and with the change in requirements in South Africa it was thought that the illegal practice would stop. There is concern that an unvaccinated person carrying a fake card could bring the yellow fever virus into Zambia where the vector mosquitoes are present and cause an outbreak. The report states that fake yellow fever certificates have been a recurrent problem in several African countries.

