

7 BEYOND OUR BORDERS

The 'Beyond our Borders' column focuses on selected and current international diseases that may affect South Africans travelling abroad.

Disease & countries	Comments	Advice to travellers
1. Water and food borne diseases		
Cholera		
<u>Africa</u>		
Tanzania	An outbreak has affected at least 3 000 people in the border region of Kagunga, following an influx of Burundian refugees.	Cholera is an acute diarrhoeal illness that causes severe dehydration. Drink lots of safe water (bottled water with an unbroken seal, boiled water or water treated with chlorine tablets). Strict washing of hands with soap and safe water must be practiced. Food must be well-cooked before eating. Peel fruit and vegetables before eating.
Malawi	The outbreak is ongoing, and as of 07 May 2015 the total number of cases reported is 281 with 3 deaths.	
Kenya	The outbreak is ongoing. As of 21 May 2015, 3 234 cases with at least 65 deaths have been reported in 11 counties since December 2014.	
Nigeria	The outbreak is ongoing. As of 08 May 2015, 256 cases and 20 deaths have been reported.	
2. Respiratory diseases		
MERS-CoV		
Global	Since April 2012 and as of 21 May 2015, 1 154 cases have been reported, including 471 deaths. To date, all cases have either occurred in the Middle East, have direct links to a primary case infected in the Middle East, or have returned from this area.	Good hygiene and basic infection prevention measures should be practiced. Travellers with diabetes, chronic lung disease and immune-compromised states are at risk of infection and should avoid contact with animals if possible. Strict hand washing must be followed after touching animals. Avoid raw camel milk or undercooked camel meat at all times. Travellers should avoid contact with animals and eat food that is fully cooked. Infection control practices such as regular hand washing must be followed to prevent infection.
Saudi Arabia	Between 13 and 21 May 2015, Saudi Arabia reported 6 additional cases.	

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2. Respiratory diseases (continued)		
Avian influenza		
<p>China (H7N9)</p> <p>Egypt (H5N1)</p>	<p>On 09 May 2015 China reported an additional 6 cases (including 2 deaths) identified since 26 March 2015.</p> <p>Since November 2014 to 30 April 2015, Egypt reported a total of 165 cases including 48 deaths. This is double the number that any country has ever reported in a single year, and is of major public health concern.</p>	<p>Good hygiene and basic infection prevention practices can minimise risk of respiratory infections in travellers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cough etiquette • avoiding contact with sick people • avoid handling of animals • frequent hand washing with soap and water or the use of an alcohol-based hand rub. <p>Travellers should contact a medical practitioner if they develop acute respiratory symptoms upon return from a known risk area.</p>
Measles		
<p>China</p> <p>Democratic Republic of Congo</p>	<p>From January to March 2015, 32 819 cases including 13 deaths were reported by Chinese health authorities. The outbreak is ongoing.</p> <p>An outbreak in Katanga area is ongoing, with >100 deaths recorded since January 2015.</p>	<p>Measles is transmitted from person to person primarily by large respiratory droplets, but can also be transmitted by the airborne route.</p> <p>Travellers to countries reporting outbreaks are encouraged to ensure that they are up to date with measles immunisation.</p>
3. Vector-borne diseases		
Dengue		
<p>Global</p>	<p>As of 15 May 2015, ongoing outbreaks have been reported in the following countries of the Americas and Asia:</p> <p><u>Central America and Mexico</u>: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama.</p> <p><u>Hispanic Caribbean</u>: Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico</p> <p><u>English, French and Dutch Caribbean</u>: American Virgin Islands</p> <p><u>South America</u>: Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Argentina and Paraguay</p> <p><u>Asia</u>: Taiwan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan, India (Karnataka State)</p>	<p>Dengue fever is a mosquito-borne viral infection transmitted by <i>Aedes</i> sp. mosquitoes, which bite mostly during the day. To protect against mosquito bites, travellers should use insect repellent and sleep in an air conditioned room. For those sleeping in an area that is exposed to the outdoors, they should use mosquito nets.</p>

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4. Other diseases		
Meningococcal disease Niger	An outbreak of <i>Neisseria meningitidis</i> serogroup C meningitis is ongoing. From 01 January to 10 May 2015, 5 855 cases including 406 deaths have been reported. This is the first large-scale meningitis outbreak caused by <i>N. meningitidis</i> serogroup C in any country in Africa's meningitis belt.	Person-to-person transmission of <i>N. meningitidis</i> occurs by close contact with respiratory secretions or saliva. Travellers intending to visit hyper-endemic countries or areas where outbreaks are reported, are encouraged to discuss vaccination (with quadrivalent conjugate meningococcal vaccine) with their healthcare provider.

References and additional reading:

ProMED-Mail (www.promedmail.org)

World Health Organization (www.who.int)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov)

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (www.ecdc.europa.eu)

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