

## BEYOND OUR BORDERS: INFECTIOUS DISEASE RISKS FOR TRAVELLERS

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
<p><b><u>MERS-CoV</u></b></p> <p>Middle East: Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).</p> <p>France, Germany, Spain, Tunisia and the United Kingdom</p> <p>Kuwait, Oman</p>	<p>As of 18 November 2013, the World Health Organization (WHO) has been informed of a total of 157 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including 66 deaths. The majority of the cases have been reported from Saudi Arabia (127 cases including 53 deaths).</p> <p>Travel to the Middle East has been associated with all these cases.</p> <p>As of 18 November these two countries have each reported cases of MERS-CoV, joining other Persian Gulf countries that have reported cases except for Bahrain.</p>	<p>Infection prevention and control measures include good cough etiquette, avoiding contact with sick people, and frequent hand washing with soap and water or the use of an alcohol-based hand rub.</p> <p>Travellers should contact a medical practitioner if they develop acute respiratory symptoms upon return from a known risk area.</p>
<p><b><u>Cholera</u></b></p> <p>Nigeria (Lagos, Zamfara, Plateau, Ogun Nasarawa and Oyo States)</p>	<p>As of 31 October 2013, 1 623 cases including 86 deaths had been reported. The outbreak was first confirmed on 2 September 2013.</p>	<p>Drink and use safe water (bottled with unbroken seal, boiled, or treated with chlorine tablet). Wash hands with soap and safe water often. Eat hot well-cooked food, peel fruits and vegetables.</p> <p>Vaccines offer delayed and incomplete protection and should therefore not be used to substitute infection prevention and control measures.</p>

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<p><b>Polio (wild-type)</b> Africa (Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria)</p> <p>Eastern Mediterranean region (Syria, Somalia, Pakistan, Afghanistan)</p>	<p>On 21 November 2013 the WHO announced that two wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) cases have been confirmed in Cameroon, the first wild poliovirus in the country since 2009. The cases were from the West Region.</p> <p>Other African countries that have reported confirmed WPV1 during 2013 include Ethiopia, Kenya and Nigeria.</p> <p>As of 19 November 2013, 13 cases of WPV1 have been confirmed in Syria. Supplementary immunisation activity targeting 1.6 million children across Syria was launched on 24 October and will be rolled out to the entire WHO Eastern Mediterranean region, given that WPV1 cases have also occurred in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Somalia during 2013.</p>	<p>Travellers are advised to ensure that they have completed the recommended age appropriate polio vaccine series.</p> <p>It is recommended for the unvaccinated, incompletely vaccinated, or those whose vaccination status is unknown that they receive 2 doses of IPV administered at an interval of 4–8 weeks, a third dose should be administered 6–12 months after the second.</p> <p>Vaccinated travellers to the area should receive a booster (ideally the inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) or alternatively oral polio vaccine (OPV) booster.</p>
<p><b>Denque fever</b> Pakistan (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh provinces)</p> <p>India (Delhi, Maharashtra and Punjab states)</p> <p>Nepal (Ratnanagar)</p> <p>Malaysia</p>	<p>As of 7 November 2013, 12 242 cases including 26 deaths have been reported.</p> <p>As of 8 November 2013, 4 793 cases including 14 deaths have been reported.</p> <p>As of 4 November 2013, 150 cases have been reported.</p> <p>As of 4 November 2013, 28 200 including 60 deaths have been reported.</p>	<p>Dengue fever is a mosquito-borne viral infection transmitted by the <i>Aedes</i> spp. mosquitoes. Dengue fever symptoms can take up to two weeks to develop from being bitten, and the symptoms include: sudden onset of fever, headache, pain behind the eyes, joint and muscle pain, rash, nausea and vomiting.</p> <p>Severe or complicated dengue fever is uncommon but can occur in the form of dengue haemorrhagic fever and dengue shock syndrome. This is more common in the young and elderly.</p> <p>Travellers should wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants during the day and stay in well-ventilated (fan/air-conditioned) rooms where possible; use mosquito repellents containing DEET to avoid being bitten. The burning of mosquito coils at night and sleeping under a mosquito net in a well-ventilated room are also helpful at preventing other infections transmitted through mosquito bites.</p>

**References and additional reading:**

ProMED-Mail ([www.promedmail.org](http://www.promedmail.org))

World Health Organization ([www.who.int](http://www.who.int))

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov))

Global Polio Eradication Initiative (<http://www.polioeradication.org/Dataandmonitoring/Poliothisweek.aspx>)

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