

BRITISH ANTARCTIC SURVEY MEDICAL UNIT – IMMUNISATION ADVICE

(May 18)

Immunisation is a method of protecting people from infectious disease. Following recommendations from the Health Protection Agency and Department of Health, BASMU has developed a schedule of vaccination which is recommended for those living and working in Antarctica. This advice will be reviewed regularly in the light of any new recommendations from the Department of Health.

Vaccines are delicate preparations that do not, in general, travel well. BASMU doctors on the stations and ships **do not** have stocks of vaccines, except tetanus vaccine which is available in small supply in the event of a tetanus prone wound being sustained. It is therefore important that everyone is in date **before leaving** the UK and will remain so whilst in the Antarctic.

Check with your GP or BASMU for what you may need at least 3 months prior to departure. Your GP should hold a record of your immunisation status and be able to provide the dates requested.

FOR EVERYONE going south

Diphtheria / Tetanus / Polio.

A combined vaccine. Booster every 10years up to a maximum of 5

Meningitis ACWY

A combined vaccine. Booster every 5 years. Offers better protection than Meningitis C vaccine alone and can be given even if you have already had the Meningitis C vaccination.

MMR (measles, mumps, rubella)

A combined vaccine, usually given in childhood, but if in doubt can be given at any time

FOR CERTAIN PEOPLE *as advised*

BCG (Tuberculosis)

If screening information highlights this requirement, can be discussed with your doctor or BASMU

Hepatitis A

For workers exposed to regular contact with raw human sewage

Hepatitis B

For those providing health care

IF POSSIBLE / PERSONAL CHOICE

Seasonal flu

This vaccine is available from October each year and may be restricted in availability from your GP, but is readily available from most high street pharmacy stores.

This offers protection to the individual and the remote community in which they will be living.

GENERAL ADVICE

The following websites offer very good information for travellers in respect of immunisations and ways to avoid diseases: www.nhs.uk/conditions/travel-immunisation or www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk or www.hpa.org.uk/infections and www.nathnac.org/travel

- Complete any initial courses **before you travel**.
- All of the vaccines are available from your GP or travel clinic.
- Please update BASMU on your immunisation status when possible.
- **Yellow Fever** is no longer required when travelling by RAF flights from Brize Norton to the Falklands.
- For those returning home **directly** by air or, more rarely, BAS ship, there are no specific requirements.
- Those who plan to travel /return home via **South America, Africa, Asia, India or the Middle East may need additional vaccination**. These vary from time to time and it is impossible to give definitive guidance in this document. Advice changes frequently and it is important that up to date information is obtained from the latest Department of Health advice to travellers or from the websites mentioned above. **This is the individual's responsibility.**

Malaria is probably the most prevalent and dangerous tropical disease that you may encounter. It is widespread, and different areas have varieties, which require different prophylactic medication. Advice varies from place to place and year to year so you should check before you travel. The Base/Ship doctor **does not** carry stocks of these medications. In the UK you may have to pay for a private prescription though some types can be bought from the pharmacist. Consultation with your home doctor about your travel plans should take place 2 to 3 months **before** you travel. Please remember before you leave UK that some of the vaccinations, such as rabies, require more than one dose at set intervals. Be aware there may not be time to fully immunise you.

Initial courses of travel vaccinations should be completed prior to leaving UK. If your cover lapses while you are in the Antarctic and you need a booster, as an independent traveller you would be able to call in to health centres and clinics located at major towns/cities en route to the areas in which you plan to travel.