



July 2017

Experts urge families to vaccinate before travelling overseas

Always vaccinate against Typhoid fever – also known as Enteric fever – before travelling to the Indian subcontinent or South East Asia.

Specialists at The Children's Hospital at Westmead are warning families travelling overseas to vaccinate against Typhoid fever.

An increase in the number of Australian resident children presenting to The Children's Hospital at Westmead has prompted the warning.

The Children's Hospital at Westmead has treated seven children this year which is consistent with the increasing trend identified in a recently published study from doctors at the Hospital.

Dr Philip Britton, Staff Specialist in the Department of Allergy and Immunology at The Children's Hospital at Westmead says that greater awareness and education is required for parents and clinicians regarding travel health risks and prevention strategies.

"We need to raise awareness of the need for travel vaccines among families visiting friends and relatives especially when travel includes the Indian subcontinent or South East Asia," Dr Britton said.

This vaccine-preventable disease is an acute illness caused by *Salmonella typhi* bacteria.

Typhoid fever is usually caused when contaminated food, milk or water is consumed, or through close contact with another infected person. Signs and symptoms include high fever, stomach pains, headache, nausea or loss of appetite and either constipation or diarrhoea.

It is important to avoid eating cold meat, uncooked foods or salads and fruit that may have been prepared in contaminated water. Avoiding such risky foods and drinks helps minimise the danger and can also protect from other illness such as diarrhoea, cholera and hepatitis A.

Treated with antibiotics, most people will feel better in a few days, however, some may die of complications.

Dr Britton says prevention is always better than cure.

"We are encouraging families planning to travel with children to the Indian subcontinent or South East Asia to ask their family doctor about pre-travel healthcare and vaccination information to avoid the risks associated with Typhoid fever.

"Ask your doctor about age restrictions for both kinds of Typhoid vaccination especially if travelling with children under the age of two.

"To ensure the vaccine has time to take effect, travellers need to complete their vaccination at least two weeks before departure.

“Typhoid vaccines lose effectiveness after two years so if you’ve been vaccinated in the past ask your doctor if a booster is needed.

“This is a timely reminder too for anyone travelling back to these regions to visit friends and relatives (VFR travel) to check their vaccination status and be vigilant about food safety and personal hygiene,” said Dr Britton.

Families returning from overseas travel to these countries are advised not to delay seeking medical attention if their children have any of the signs or symptoms of Typhoid fever.

ENDS