



# Cook Islands

The following information must be viewed as a guide only. It is not intended, nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice.

Specific recommendations on vaccinations and targeted travel health advice is always provided on an individual basis taking into account:

- the personal health of the traveller including past medical and vaccination history;
- intended activities;
- precise itinerary;
- style of travel;
- type of accommodation;
- time of year;
- altitude;
- length of stay.

As well, some vaccines are very much influenced by local disease risk. Specific face-to-face advice is particularly important when recommending preventative health strategies and presumptive treatment eg for travellers diarrhoea.

We strongly recommend travellers seek an appointment with a doctor trained in travel health prior to departure.

Medical and nursing staff at Travel Doctor (TMVC) are trained in international public health issues with a focus on immunisations and preventive medicine. Many have travelled extensively and a number have worked in less developed areas of the world for extended periods.

Travellers should undergo individual risk assessments whether they are short term holiday makers, business people or the long term expatriate worker. The Travel Doctor (TMVC) has clinics Australia wide. In Australia the local centre may be contacted on 1300 658 844, or

by visiting [www.traveldoctor.com.au](http://www.traveldoctor.com.au). It is recommended that you visit a travel health professional 6-8 weeks prior to departure. However, if that time frame is not possible, remember – “It’s never too late to vaccinate”.

## Healthy Travelling in the Cook Islands

The Cook Islands are becoming increasingly popular with Australian travellers wanting a South Pacific Island holiday away from the more developed destinations. The time zone and latitude corresponds with that of Hawaii, and the islands have been promoted to the North American market as being “Hawaii down under”.

Pre-travel preparation will help protect your health while you are away. To assist you in recognising and understanding some of the major travel health risks you may face while holidaying in the Cook Islands, the Travel Doctor (TMVC) has prepared a summary of some of these issues in the following pages. **Table 1** provides a brief description of some of the major travel health issues and vaccinations that should be considered for travel to the Cook Islands.

**Table 2** provides a summary of these major travel health issues and preventative measures that should be considered.

We hope you find this information useful in preparing for your trip. Remember it is advisable to consult a travel health specialist prior to departure.

Currency of your basic immunisations such as Tetanus and Diphtheria should be checked and others like Hepatitis A and Typhoid considered according to the criteria mentioned previously.

**Table 1. Major Travel Health Issues & Considerations for the Cook Islands**

Hepatitis A	This is a viral disease of the liver which is transmitted through eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water. It is the most common vaccine preventable disease that occurs in travellers to less developed areas of the world. It is strongly recommended for travel to the Cook Islands.
Hepatitis B	This is a viral disease of the liver that is transmitted via blood, blood products or bodily fluids. It is vaccine preventable. Hepatitis B immunisation is now part of the childhood immunisation schedule. Many adult travellers have missed this very important immunisation and travel may be a good reason for vaccination.
Typhoid	Typhoid Fever is caused by a bacteria found in contaminated food & water. It is endemic in the South Pacific and vaccination is recommended for travellers to this region.
Tetanus, Pertussis & Diphtheria	Tetanus is caused by a toxin released by a common dust or soil bacteria, which enters the body through a wound. Diphtheria is a bacterial infection of the throat and occasionally of the skin. It is found world wide and is transmitted from person-to-person by coughing and sneezing. Pertussis(Whooping cough) is a highly infectious respiratory infection responsible for 300,000 deaths annually, mainly in children. Diphtheria and pertussis vaccines can be added to the tetanus vaccine. Because many adults no longer have immunity from childhood immunisation it is advised that travellers to less developed countries have a tetanus ,diphtheria and pertussis booster.



Measles, Mumps & Rubella	Childhood immunisation coverage in many developing countries is not very good. As such, travellers whose birth date is after 1966 should check they have had 2 doses of measles vaccine. Since 1990 this may have been as the combination vaccine MMR (measles, mumps and rubella). Those born prior to 1966 are most likely to have long term immunity from previous exposure as a child.
Chickenpox	This very common infectious disease can now be prevented through immunisation. Many people miss the disease in childhood only to have a significant illness as an adult. Travel puts one at higher exposure and if one cannot elicit a history of having had the illness a test can show whether at risk.
Influenza	Individuals intending to travel out of an Australian winter might consider the current flu vaccine at the beginning of the season. Exposure to illness in airports and commuter transport is common and exposure may ruin a much needed break. In fact, influenza is likely to be the most common vaccine preventable disease faced by travellers.
Dengue Fever	Dengue (pronounced den-gee) Fever is a viral disease with flu like symptoms that is transmitted by mosquitoes that bite during the daytime and in urban regions. There is no vaccine for dengue fever and prevention is based upon insect avoidance via repellents, nets and insecticides.
Traveller's Diarrhoea	Up to 40% of tourists may develop 3 or more loose bowel motions a day within the first week of travel. A variety of germs can be responsible for this infection and a traveller's medical kit containing appropriate therapy can rapidly improve the symptoms.

**Table 2. Summary of travel health issues for the Cook Islands & preventative options available**


	Vaccine Available	Healthy Eating & Drinking	Insect Avoidance
Hepatitis A	✓	✓	
Hepatitis B	✓		
Typhoid	✓	✓	
Tetanus, Pertussis & Diphtheria	✓		
Measles, Mumps & Rubella	✓		
Chickenpox	✓		
Influenza	✓		
Dengue Fever			✓
Traveller's Diarrhoea		✓	

✓ indicates preventative considerations

**Malaria** does not occur in the Cook Islands although health authorities need to deal with a number of imported cases each year.

**Tuberculosis** is 10 times more common in the Cook Islands than here in Australia, but it is rarely a health problem for tourists.

Additional information & fact sheets can be found at the Travel Doctor-TMVC website [www.traveldoctor.com.au](http://www.traveldoctor.com.au).



Remember to check the DFAT 'Smartraveller' website [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au) prior to departure



Travel Health Fact Sheet **Cook Islands**  
 Copyright © The Travel Doctor-TMVC Pty Ltd 2010

Clinics Australia Wide. To find your nearest clinic call  
**1300 658 844** or visit [www.traveldoctor.com.au](http://www.traveldoctor.com.au)