



Japan

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, antimalarial medications & targeted travel health advice is always provided on an individual basis taking into account:

- the personal health of the traveller including past medical & 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. Future travel plans can also be taken into account because of the long term protection afforded by some vaccines. Specific face-to-face advice is particularly important when recommending antimalarial medications & those for presumptive treatment eg for travellers diarrhoea.

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

Medical & nursing staff at The Travel Doctor-TMVC are trained in international public health issues with a focus on immunisations & preventive medicine. Many have travelled extensively & 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. 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 Japan

Japan is a beautiful country, renowned for a diverse range of tourism attractions. Generally, travelling in Japan is safe & no major travel illnesses are prevalent, although influenza outbreaks can be severe due to the population density. Pre-travel preparation will help protect your health while you are away. To assist you in recognising & understanding some of the major travel health risks you may face while holidaying in Japan, 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 & vaccinations that should be considered for travel to Japan.

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

Raw seafood consumption is common in Japan, & is usually safe as a result of stringent public health initiatives, but there is still the occasional case of parasitic infection as a result of this practice. Although infection is rare, it should still be considered if gastrointestinal symptoms persist after return to Australia.

Since February 2007, there have been a significant number of cases of measles reported in Tokyo & other prefectures as far north as Hokkaido. Measles is a potentially serious infectious disease & the Department of Health & Ageing advises that travellers should ensure they are protected against measles prior to travel & should consult their doctor.

The World Health Organisation has confirmed deaths from avian influenza & outbreaks of avian influenza amongst birds in the region. The Department of Health & Ageing advises Australians who reside in Japan for an extended period to consider, as a precautionary measure, having access to influenza antiviral medicine for treatment. Long term residents are at a greater risk of exposure to avian influenza over time. You should seek medical advice before taking antiviral medicines. Australians intending to travel to Japan for shorter periods are at much lower risk of infection but should discuss the risk of avian influenza with the travel doctor as part of their pre-travel health check.

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.



Table 1. Major Travel Health Issues & Considerations for Japan

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 & occasionally of the skin. It is found world wide & is transmitted from person-to-person by coughing & sneezing. Pertussis(Whooping cough) is a highly infectious respiratory infection responsible for 300,000 deaths annually, mainly in children. Diphtheria & 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 & 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 & rubella). Those born prior to 1966 are most likely to have long term immunity from previous exposure as a child.
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 & commuter transport is common & exposure may ruin a much needed break. In fact, influenza is likely to be the most common vaccine preventable disease faced by travellers.
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 & if one cannot elicit a history of having had the illness a test can show whether at risk.
Japanese Encephalitis (JE)	JE is a mosquito borne viral disease prevalent in rural areas of South East Asia that can lead to serious brain infection in humans. Risk is usually greatest during the monsoon months. A vaccine is available & is particularly recommended for adults & children over 12 months of age who will be spending a month or more in rice growing areas of countries at risk (or who repeatedly visit such areas). It is also recommended for people travelling to an area where an outbreak is known to be occurring. Insect avoidance should be considered the primary means of defence. Vaccination is routine in the Japanese population, & hence disease is rare, although studies have shown that the virus is still prevalent
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 & a traveller's medical kit containing appropriate therapy can rapidly improve the symptoms.

Table 2: Summary of travel health issues for Japan & preventative options available

	Vaccine Available	Healthy Eating & Drinking
Tetanus, Pertussis & Diphtheria	✓	
Measles, Mumps & Rubella	✓	
Influenza	✓	
Chickenpox	✓	
Japanese Encephalitis (JE)	✓	
Traveller's Diarrhoea	+/-	✓

+/- The new oral cholera vaccine has been shown to provide limited protection against some forms of traveller's diarrhoea. You should discuss this with your travel health specialist
 ✓ indicates preventative considerations

Some **prescription** & over-the-counter medications cannot be imported into Japan. Japanese Customs may detain travellers possessing prohibited items which include products containing pseudoephedrine, found in cold & flu tablets, & codeine. You can obtain further information from the Japanese Embassy in Australia.

Remember to check the DFAT 'Smartraveller' website www.smartraveller.gov.au prior to departure



Travel Health Fact Sheet **Japan**
 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