



**FOOD AND DRUGS AUTHORITY**

*Your Well-being, Our Priority.*

## **Vaccines for Travelers to Ghana**

### **Routine Vaccinations or Necessary Boosters**

Most Western European and North American vaccinate against many childhood diseases and provide boosters to those diseases well into adulthood. The Tdap vaccination for tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis is especially important when traveling to the West African region. Tetanus causes lockjaw and can be contracted by stepping on nails, siding, or other deteriorating building material. The MMR shot that fights measles, mumps, and rubella is also important. Although measles and mumps are not rampant in developed parts of the world, many developing nations have occasional outbreaks.

### **Hepatitis A**

Hepatitis A is spread by eating foods that have been prepared in an unhygienic environment or by someone who has not properly washed their hands before preparing food. Many travelers also rely on a false sense of security that fancy five- star resorts provide. Travelers expecting to be in a region of Ghana with high Hepatitis A activity should be vaccinated.

### **Hepatitis B**

Hepatitis B is transferred to humans by means of infected blood or by sexual transmission. Even if they are not planning to use intravenous drug equipment or razors, or have sexual contact with locals in Ghana, travelers should still be vaccinated. A traveler who has an accident that causes bleeding or receives care from a hospital that does not properly sanitize equipment is otherwise at unnecessary risk.

### **Polio**

The polio vaccine is administered as a routine vaccination in most Western European and North American nations. However, travelers living in a country that does not routinely vaccinate against polio should receive the vaccine before travel to Ghana. Polio can cause serious illness, disability or even death. All adult travelers to Ghana should consult with their physician and vaccination records to determine if a complete vaccine is needed or if a simple booster will suffice.

## **Rabies**

Wild animals in the rural and forested regions may come in contact with unknowing travelers. Small mammals and bats near caves or in trees are of special concern. Check with a pediatrician regarding child vaccination against rabies because children are often the travelers that want to touch and trust wildlife. Any adults planning on camping, hiking or working with animals in Ghana should be vaccinated as well.

## **Yellow Fever**

Yellow fever -- named for the possibility of its victims' suffering from jaundice as a symptom -- kills approximately half of its victims that do not receive treatment, according to the World Health Organization. Tropical Africa, including Ghana, is a hotbed of yellow fever activity, and this activity has worsened in recent years as human habitat continues to encroach on areas where mosquitoes breed and climate change. Getting vaccinated against yellow fever before travel to Ghana is imperative for prevention.

## **Typhoid**

Typhoid, spread by contact with infected parties and by infected food and water supply, causes stomach pain and digestive problems. Although typhoid can usually be treated successfully with antibiotics or a series of antibiotics, many travelers find it's best to avoid the risk and simply get the vaccine. Travelers traveling with small children should consult the child's pediatrician for vaccination advice.

## **Meningitis**

Meningitis peaks in many parts of the world between December and June. This disease can come on very quickly, usually within a few hours or within a day, and causes high fever and a stiff neck. Meningitis can be classified as either viral or bacterial and will need to be identified to ensure proper treatment. In addition to receiving the vaccination, practicing good hand hygiene and avoiding the sharing of food instruments and drinking glasses can prevent transmission.

## **Malaria Prevention**

Malaria is transmitted to humans by mosquitoes carrying malaria parasites through bites and can result in high fever and possibly death. Most medications for malaria prevention are administered orally and are taken before, during, and after a visit to a malarious zone since there is no vaccine for malaria. Different regions have different strains of malaria, and treatment will depend on the dominant strain in the area. Travelers should be sure to inform their physician of their visit to Ghana.

*Source: <http://traveltips.usatoday.com>*