

Traveller Information Sheets

Altered Immune Status Travellers.

Who are altered immune status persons?

There are many different kinds of conditions that can result in a person having an altered immune status. Some people may belong to the following categories of immune compromise / suppression:

- Persons taking immune-suppressive medication
- Persons with a malignancy
- Chronic disease
- Congenital immune defects
- HIV
- Pregnancy
- Splenectomy
- Diabetes
- Multiple sclerosis

This list is not exhaustive, but attempts to cover the basics, other conditions not mentioned here can be discussed with the health practitioner during consultation.

Can people with an altered immune system travel overseas?

There are lots of points for consideration;

- Is their condition stable?
- Has their specialist certified them fit for travel?
- Are they able to receive vaccinations? Which ones?
- Where are they planning on travelling to?
- Is there a chance their health may deteriorate at the destination?
- Is there adequate medical care at their destination?

Can travellers with an altered immune status have vaccinations?

This must be carefully assessed on an individual basis. Some travellers may need to be referred on to a specialist (or back to their own specialist) for an expert opinion.

Considerations for vaccine recommendations, such as the destination and the likely risk of exposure to disease, are the same for immunocompromised travelers as for other travellers. It is important to note though, a person with an altered immune status' response to vaccination may not be as high as expected, due to their existing health conditions. There may be a possibility that further (extra) booster doses of vaccines may be required, or that extra counseling in avoiding disease transmission may need to occur.

When should people with an altered immune status book in at the travel clinic?

Ideally, these people should book an appointment before they purchase and pay for their ticket, most airlines do not refund for change of mind purchases, leaving these travellers to recoup the lost money from their insurance, if at all.

Reference

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2014, Atlanta GA, viewed 15th April 2014, <<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/yellowbook/2014/chapter-8-advising-travelers-with-specific-needs/immunocompromised-travelers>>