

Overseas travel and risk of tuberculosis (TB) in children

Advice for patients and families

- *Bacille Calmette-Guérin (BCG) is a vaccine that lowers the risk of tuberculosis (TB). Children younger than 5 years of age who are going for 4 weeks or more to countries where TB is common should get the vaccine.*
- *Children should get the BCG vaccine at least 3 months before travelling.*
- *You should take steps to protect children from TB while travelling even after a BCG vaccine.*
- *Watch for signs and symptoms of TB and get medical advice if you notice any.*

People going to countries where tuberculosis (TB) is common (health.nsw.gov.au/tb-countries) are at risk of being infected with TB bacteria. If young children are infected, they are at higher risk of severe types of TB.

Bacille Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccine

Children younger than 5 years of age who are going for 4 weeks or more to a country where TB is common should get the BCG vaccine. The vaccine gives more than 70% protection against severe types of TB in young children. It can take 3 months to give protection against TB. To allow for delays, BCG vaccine should be requested 4-6 months before travelling.

The BCG vaccine is the preferred way to protect against TB. If you can't get your child vaccinated before they travel, take other steps to protect them while travelling.

Steps to protect children from TB

While in countries where TB is common, you should:

- Wear a face mask (where possible) in indoor public spaces.
- Get together with family and friends outside or in well ventilated spaces.
- Do not visit people who are sick or have a cough or fever.
- Watch for signs and symptoms of TB and get medical advice if you notice them.

Signs and symptoms of TB

Some people infected with TB bacteria will not have symptoms or illness. Other people, such as children, can quickly become sick with severe types of TB. Fevers, a cough lasting more than 3 weeks, coughing up blood, night sweats, unexpected weight loss and feeling tired are symptoms of TB. Lumps, swelling or pain in the neck or under the jaw can be symptoms of TB in children.

Checking for TB after being overseas

Your child should get checked for TB once they're back in Australia if they have not had BCG vaccine and have travelled for 4 or more weeks to a country where TB is common. There is medicine that can help stop children from getting sick if they have TB infection. Testing and medicine for TB is free in NSW.

Call your local TB service (health.nsw.gov.au/tb-services) to learn more about how to get your child checked for TB.

For more information on TB, visit the NSW Health website (health.nsw.gov.au/tb).