

Guidance for parents and carers:

Overseas travel and risk of tuberculosis in children

Key points

- BCG vaccination is recommended for children aged less than 5 years before travelling for 3 months or more to a country where there is a high risk of tuberculosis (TB).
- BCG vaccine in Australia is limited and it may be difficult to get your child vaccinated prior to travel.
- If you are unable to obtain BCG for your children before you travel, it is recommended that you take steps to protect your child from exposure to TB whilst travelling and have a test 3 months after returning to Australia.
- Whilst overseas and after returning to Australia, watch out for signs and symptoms of TB and seek medical advice early if you or your children have symptoms.

Overseas travel and risk of tuberculosis

Tuberculosis (TB) remains a common disease in many parts of the world. People travelling to high TB risk countries, especially for long periods of time, are at increased risk of being infected with TB by coming into contact with people with infectious TB (see [here](#) for high risk countries). If infected, young children are at high risk of developing serious forms of the disease, such as TB in the brain.

BCG vaccination is recommended for children aged less than 5 years if travelling for 3 months or more in a single or multiple trips to a country where there is a high risk of TB. We recommend requesting BCG vaccination 4-6 months before departure. However, in some cases it may be difficult to get your child vaccinated before they travel.

Actions to protect children from TB and other airborne infections whilst travelling

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick with cough or fever
- Avoid spending long periods in enclosed spaces with poor air flow
- If you are planning get-togethers with family and friends, plan to meet at an outdoor venue, or in a room with good air flow

Signs and symptoms of tuberculosis in children

TB bacteria can hide in the body without causing any symptoms; however children can sometimes quickly become sick with serious TB disease. TB disease can affect any part of the body and cause different symptoms. Common symptoms of TB include fever, sweating at night-time, tiredness, cough and weight loss. Children may have enlarged lymph nodes or glands, such as around the neck or under the jaw, as the only sign of TB.

Screening for tuberculosis after overseas travel

If you are travelling with children aged less than 5 years to a country with a high risk of TB, and staying there 3 months or more, and you are unable to obtain BCG before you leave, it is recommended that your children have a test to check for TB infection when you return to Australia. If your child is found to have TB bacteria hiding in the body, treatment can be given to prevent them becoming sick with TB disease. TB testing and treatment is provided free of charge in NSW. [Contact your local TB Service](#) to arrange an appointment.

For more information check the NSW Health website – www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/tuberculosis/