



occupational health solutions

## OHSI 7.4 Foreign Travel

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### 1.Purpose and Scope

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To ensure that travellers are aware of the risks to their health because of their work when they are outside the UK, and that those risks are controlled.

To ensure that travellers are fit to travel and work outside the UK, taking any pre-existing medical conditions into account.

Applies to all operating units and departments.

### 2.Definitions

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**Traveller.** Any employee engaged on Company business outside the UK including those on secondment. May include contractors, agency and temporary staff depending on Company policy for protecting the health and safety of these groups. A Regular Traveller makes two or more journeys outside the UK each year, an Infrequent Traveller, travels less than twice a year.

**Company business.** Includes the employees' normal work activity and any associated travel. Includes residence in hotel or other accommodation arranged on behalf of or with the approval of the Company. Does not include residence, trips, activities or excursions arranged by the traveller if they have no connection with their work.

### 3.Principles

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The Company has a duty of care to persons engaged on Company business, including those who are outside the UK and not on Company premises. Risks to health must be assessed, eliminated, reduced or controlled.

Only a few medical conditions constitute an absolute bar to travel or work outside the UK. Individual cases will be assessed on their merits bearing in mind the risk to the individual and the business need. Special arrangements may be required.

Assessment of health risks to travellers will include consideration of:

- The necessity for, and possible alternatives to travel outside the UK.
- The mode(s) of travel.
- The type of accommodation and the duration of stay.
- The nature of the travellers' work.
- The medical fitness of the traveller.
- The type and prevalence of disease in the areas to be visited compared with the UK.
- Availability of health services.

Methods of elimination, reduction or control of health risks to travellers include:

- Avoiding travel or choosing a different method, time or route of travel.
- Careful selection of accommodation.
- Instruction and information for travellers.
- Immunisation, chemoprophylaxis (antimalarials) and the provision of medical supplies for use when travelling.
- Health assessment for certain groups of travellers before (and sometimes after) travel.
- Planned arrangements for emergency medical treatment or repatriation.

Travellers also have a duty to ensure their health and safety while travelling on Company business. Travellers can decide whether to comply with advice regarding immunisations and chemoprophylaxis however their manager may prevent them from travelling if the health risks are unacceptable.

Persons travelling outside North and Western Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand are at increased risk of travel related illness and will require access to Travel Health facilities for health assessment, advice and immunisation.

## 4. Responsibilities

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### 4.1. First Line Manager

Ensure that the risks to travellers' health have been assessed and controlled.

Ensure that travellers have access to appropriate advice and travel health facilities, usually through a local Travel Clinic or the Company's occupational health service.

### 4.2. Traveller

Obtain travel health information prior to travel and try to reduce the risks to their health while travelling by following the advice given.

Attend for travel health assessment and bring any relevant records e.g. vaccination certificates.

Notify first line manager or occupational health if immunisations or antimalarials have been recommended but refused or not obtained.

Notify their manager or occupational health of any illness or injury experienced while working outside the UK.

### 4.3. Occupational Health Nurse

Ensure that the traveller has received appropriate travel health advice and is aware of any arrangements for treatment or repatriation if they should become unwell while engaged on Company business outside the UK.

Perform health assessment in accordance with local arrangements and offer immunisations and antimalarials if appropriate (see appendix 1).

Issue any medical supplies and instructions for their use

Make an entry in the international certificate of vaccination.

Provide a statement that the traveller is fit for their intended duties and travel.

(Some of these responsibilities may be delegated to other Travel Health Service providers.)

### 4.4. Occupational Health Physician

Provide advice to managers performing risk assessments.

Develop and oversee the implementation of a local policy for health assessment of travellers and provision of travel health services.

Make additional enquiries / carry out examinations as appropriate when there is doubt about an individual's fitness to travel and work outside the UK.

If the occupational health department is a designated yellow fever vaccination centre, act as "registered medical practitioner in charge" and ensure compliance with Department of Health requirements.

## 5. Audit Criteria

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Are risks to travellers assessed and controlled?

Do travellers have access to advice and travel health facilities?

Are health assessments performed in accordance with appendix 1?

## 6. References

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1. National Travel Health Network and Centre (NATHNAC). <https://nathnac.net>
2. United states Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Traveler's Health. <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>
3. OHS Instructions: OHSI 11 – Anaphylaxis
4. OHS forms: TravelQ – foreign travel health questionnaire and examination record

## 7. Revision History

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Author	Issue	Date	Reason for revision	Review by
David Shackleton	1	April 2000	First Issue	April 2002
David Shackleton	2	December 2008	Second issue	December 2011
David Shackleton	3	March 2014	Updated references	March 2018

David Shackleton	4	September 2020	Updated references	September 2024
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These occupational health instructions are aimed at a level analogous to local rules or work instructions within a corporate hierarchy of policies on health, safety, environment and human resources.

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## Appendix 1. Medical Assessment

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### 1. Criteria for Inclusion

All employees who are likely to be engaged on Company business outside the UK in the next twelve months.

### 2. Frequency of Assessment

Regular traveller (likely to make two or more journeys outside the UK each year) – annually. Infrequent traveller (likely to travel less than twice a year) – two months prior to travel.

### 3. Assessment

Questionnaire, height, weight, pulse, blood pressure, vision, hearing, mobility and coordination, urinalysis. Travel advice, immunisations, supply of medication.

Assessment	Standard
Questionnaire	No positive response <sup>1</sup>
Travel health advice	Ensure traveller has or is given appropriate information and understands the risks of failing to follow it. Document any refusal to accept immunisation or antimalarials.
Immunisation status <sup>2</sup>	Ensure immunisations are appropriate for destination(s). Provide immunisations if available. Update immunisation record.
Treatment /chemoprophylaxis	Issue any travel pack or medical supplies including antimalarials if appropriate. Instruct the traveller on safe use of medical supplies.
Vision	6/9 distance and N8 near, binocular, with correction if worn. Snellen and near vision charts OR a vision screener may be used
Cardiovascular	Pulse regular 50 – 90 at rest Blood pressure not consistently above 180/100
Mobility and coordination	No obvious impairment of joint movement, co-ordination or mobility that would prevent safe travel. Identify any special arrangements required.
Hearing	Able to hear normal conversation.
Urinalysis	No glycosuria or proteinuria.

#### Notes:

1. Positive responses may be disregarded if, in the opinion of the occupational health nurse, they have no relevance to work or travel abroad.
2. ANAPHYLAXIS: - Where immunisations are given, a third person (e.g. doctor, first aider) must be present in the department and at least one person must be capable of recognising and treating anaphylaxis. Facilities must be adequate for the treatment of this condition.

### 4. Criteria for Referral

Travellers will be considered fit to travel if they give a negative response to the questionnaire and meet the standards listed above.

Travellers who decline to take advantage of the recommended immunisations or antimalarial chemoprophylaxis will be asked for permission for their manager to be notified. If permission is not granted then the occupational health nurse will defer issuing a statement of fitness if they consider that the risks of travel related illness are significantly increased.

Where there is doubt about an individuals' fitness to travel or work outside the UK, or to receive immunisations/antimalarials, then the occupational health nurse will discuss the case with the occupational physician. The occupational physician may obtain consent to seek additional information from the applicants GP or Specialist and / or arrange to examine the individual before passing an opinion on their fitness to travel and any restrictions or adjustments that may be necessary.