

VACCINATION BEFORE GOING ABROAD

Matsuo Tanaka, JICA expert

During recent tough months, we have experienced how stoic and costly virus containment is.

How do you spend your days minding the daily patient numbers of COVID-19?

People focus on border control against COVID-19 and vaccinations for other diseases.

For overseas travels, including short stays and study abroad, we need vaccination records, or immunization records of yellow fever, polio, or measles, depending on countries. If vaccination for COVID-19 will get to be general in the future, showing an immunization record probably will be mandatory for overseas travel (a negative PCR test result has already been required.)

There are so many kinds of pathogens globally, and efficacious vaccines seal off many diseases. Recently, in Japan, the government has recommended routine vaccination for children and a pneumococcus vaccination for the elderly.

This newsletter proposes vaccination recommended for overseas travel.

CHECK AND PLAN BEFORE YOU GO

Let's visit the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare's website below to know your travel destination's fashion and food but epidemic diseases.

FORTH: www.forth.go.jp/index.html

Tetanus, hepatitis A, and typhus abdominal are infected through outdoor activities or waterborne, and hepatitis B is picked up through blood.

Healthcare workers and people who might be infected are required to the above vaccinations.

Most Asian countries have recommended vaccinations for Japanese encephalitis, rabies, and meningococcal meningitis. We need to check the

countries and regions because they vary. Some countries have issued a warning for measles.

When you get information about your destination's epidemic diseases, let's consult your doctor, including the vaccination schedule. Outpatient clinics specializing in overseas travel are the best choice because they stock various vaccines.

Your family doctor, such as internal medicine or pediatrics, is probably ready for tetanus or Japanese encephalitis recommended domestically. As for yellow fever, we should consult quarantines.

By the way, do you remember what kind of shots you had in your childhood? Or do you have your immunization records after you start working? A maternal handbook is a big help, but the vaccination system is complicated for me. Depending on the year you are born, you must have had DTP (diphtheria, pertussis, and tetanus) or DTP-IPV (inactivated polio vaccine.) I, a non-professional, cannot even distinguish the kinds of measles. I only remember a childhood friend crying because he did not like to have shots.

A VACCINATION RECORD IS RECOMMENDED

Time flies, and we forget quickly. So, I suggest recording your vaccination. It is wise to check your maternal handbook and ask your parent about your medical history. I regret I should have done this in my twenties, and your record should include the vaccination and vaccine manufacturer time.

Tetanus, hepatitis, and rabies require three shots until immunity is acquired. Besides, the acquired immunity, which has been adapted once, declines its antibody levels over time and disappears finally. To retain the efficaciousness, you need a booster while the antibody is still active. Tetanus immune also has a time limit, a booster is required after three initial shots.

Again, I recommend you visit your specialists with your vaccination records to consult the required vaccines and boosters. They will advise you on the validity of your childhood immunizations and their antibody levels.

Some medical checkup programs offer the antibody level check for hepatitis A&B, and some public healthcare centers offer rubella's antibody check. Why don't you take these opportunities to confirm your antibody levels?

Many vaccines are not covered by national health insurance, and they are not cheap. You are responsible for vaccination, including the information and doctor's consultation you need. So it would be best if you considered the required vaccinations depending on the risks associated with your work and destinations. Sometimes, your employer is responsible for them, depending on your work and the vaccines.

Only a few diseases can be prevented by vaccination, and some infections like rabies need post-exposure protection in addition to pre-exposure immunization. So please confirm the reliable medical information about each illness by yourself, and you should check the latest information about malaria, dengue fever, and bird flu.

The description of this newsletter is based on the immunization guidelines of JICA and the specialist's advice. Though restrictions on overseas travel have made my assignment schedule unsure, I have prepared for my departure to Indonesia. Stay safe, everyone.