

# TRAVEL ADVISORY

Following are the policy guidelines regarding requirement of polio vaccination for travellers between India and Papua New Guinea, as shared by the World Health Organization -India Office, and these clarifications are according to 17th meeting recommendation of the Emergency Committee under the International Health Regulation to which Government of India is committed.

**Subject:** Regarding clarification on travel recommendations for polio vaccination for travellers between India and Papua New Guinea

India has maintained its polio-free status for more than 7 years now, but still remains at the risk of poliovirus importation from polio-infected countries. The 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Emergency Committee under the International Health Regulations (2005) (IHR) regarding the international spread of poliovirus convened by the WHO Director-General in April 2018 upheld temporary recommendations to reduce the international spread of poliovirus. These include ensuring that all people travelling from polio-endemic countries are required to have vaccination prior to travel, and this should be extended to any persistently polio-affected country.

Recently, Papua New Guinea reported four acute flaccid paralysis cases and two healthy contacts with Type 1 vaccine-derived poliovirus (VDPV1) in three provinces. In view of this VDPV1 polio outbreak, the Government of Papua New Guinea has proactively implemented emergency measures, including declaring the outbreak a national public health emergency and recommending vaccination of travellers. As a component of emergency measures, four rounds of large-scale immunization campaigns are being conducted in the country between July and October 2018, with targeted efforts to strengthen surveillance systems to aid in early virus detection. Further information is available at: <http://polioeradication.org/where-we-work/papua-new-guinea/>

Based on the recent IHR guidelines, the following applies for travellers out of Papua New Guinea:

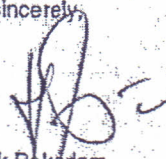
- Ensure that all residents and long term visitors (i.e. > four weeks) of all ages receive a dose of bivalent oral poliovirus vaccine (bOPV) or inactivated poliovirus vaccine (IPV) between four weeks and 12 months prior to international travel.
- Ensure that those undertaking urgent travel (i.e. within four weeks), who have not received a dose of bOPV or IPV in the previous four weeks to 12 months, receive a dose of polio vaccine at least by the time of departure as this will still provide benefit, particularly for frequent travellers.
- Ensure that such travellers are provided with an International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis to record their polio vaccination and serve as proof of vaccination.
- Restrict at the point of departure the international travel of any resident lacking documentation of appropriate polio vaccination. These recommendations apply to international travellers from all points of departure, irrespective of the means of conveyance (e.g. road, air, sea).
- Maintain these measures until the following criteria have been met: (i) at least six months have passed without new infections and (ii) there is documentation of full application of high quality eradication activities in all infected and high risk areas; in the absence of such documentation these measures should be maintained until the country meets the above assessment criteria for being no longer infected.

WHO also continues to advise travellers to countries where the polio virus is still circulating to ensure that they have completed the age-appropriate polio vaccine series, according to their respective national immunization schedule. Adult travellers to polio-infected countries who have previously received three or more doses of OPV or IPV should also be given another one-time booster dose of polio vaccine. For persons who previously received only IPV, OPV should be the choice for the booster dose, if available and feasible.

The above information has been provided in consultation with our Regional Office. We sincerely hope that it addresses the concerns and will facilitate informed decision-making for polio vaccination of travelers between India and Papua New Guinea.

Thank you and regards,

Yours sincerely,

  
Dr Henk Bekedam  
WHO Representative to India