

# Medical Treatment Abroad



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Leaders taking Scouts abroad are reminded that treatment under the National Health Service is only available whilst members are in the United Kingdom. Members requiring medical and dental treatment abroad may have to pay for all or part of any services provided. Although most visits abroad go without a hitch, precautions must be taken in case of illness or accident.

## Health Precautions

Booklet T5 "Health Advice for Travellers", available from the Department of Health and Post Offices, outlines the way in which medical treatment abroad can be obtained free or at a reduced cost anywhere in the world. It also gives details of required and recommended vaccinations for specific countries, as well as additional advice on Rabies, Malaria, Aids and other diseases.

For most countries of the European Union, it is necessary to have Form E111 "Certificate of Entitlement" which enables refunds to be claimed before leaving the country concerned. This form is incorporated in Booklet T5. Details of other countries in which it is possible to obtain treatment or medicines free, or at reduced cost, are also included.

## Travel Insurance

Scout visits abroad are authorised by means of Form PC (Abroad) which is included in the Visits Abroad folder, available from your Assistant County/Area Commissioner (International). One of the requirements before giving approval for the visit is for the party Leader to ensure that adequate travel insurance cover has been arranged.

Taking out travel insurance cover prior to the journey reduces the financial risk of having to pay for medical treatment and it is necessary even for visits to countries with whom the United Kingdom has health facilities agreements. In most

countries the provision under these agreements does not cover all medical expenses and never covers the cost of bringing a person back to the UK in the event of illness or death.

The Scout Association has a very comprehensive travel insurance policy available to groups undertaking authorised visits abroad. It includes cover for Personal Accident benefits, Medical Expenses, Cancellation, Loss of Baggage and Money and Personal Liability and is available at an attractive premium.

An emergency aid service is also included at no extra charge. This provides the services of a network of multilingual doctors, agents and coordinators in most countries of the world in addition to a repatriation scheme.

Full details of this policy and additional motor vehicle, money, holiday and equipment insurance, along with advice on all travel insurance matters, may be obtained from Scout Insurance Services, The Scout Association, Churchill Industrial Estate, Lancing, West Sussex, BN 15 8UG (Tel: 01903 755352 Fax: 01903 750993).

## Emergencies

All groups are required to appoint a home contact in case of an emergency at home or abroad and the Visits Abroad folder contains more details of this arrangement. This home contact should not be related to the Leader or any other member of the party. Leaders of Groups travelling abroad should be familiar with the rules concerning visits abroad and emergency procedures in POR.

## MENINGITIS

A number of meningitis scares have occurred in recent years, sometimes amongst groups travelling abroad. The symptoms can develop quickly, so prompt action can mean the difference between life and death.

## The Scout Information Centre

Gilwell Park Chingford London E4 7QW Tel + 44 (0)20 8433 7100 Fax + 44 (0)20 8433 7103 email info.centre@scout.org.uk www.scoutbase.org.uk

Some bacteria that cause meningitis often cause septicaemia (blood poisoning). An important sign of septicaemia is a rash which starts off as tiny red or purple pin pricks anywhere on the body. These spots may develop quickly into what looks like fresh bruises. The spots or bruises do not disappear when pressed firmly using a glass.

In young people and adults the signs of meningitis are:

- \* Vomiting
- \* High temperature/fever
- \* Violent or severe headache
- \* Neck Stiffness
- \* Dislike of bright lights
- \* Drowsiness, lethargy or confusion
- \* Joint pains
- \* Fitting

Only some of these symptoms may show. IF IN DOUBT, CONTACT A DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY.

Information source: National Meningitis Trust

### **TICK - BORNE ENCEPHALITIS IN EUROPE**

Tick-borne Encephalitis is an infection of the brain caused by a virus. Serious illness and permanent disability may ensue in a proportion of cases and death occasionally results.

The disease occurs in forested areas of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. In recent years, approximately 500 cases annually have been reported in Austria and this has naturally been of concern to Scout Groups planning visits to Austria.

Rodents, insectivores and sometimes other mammals can act as hosts for the virus which is spread to man by the bite of the common wood tick which inhabits the undergrowth in well wooded areas. In high risk areas, it has been estimated that 1 in 1,000 ticks is a virus carrier.

The only significant risk is to persons who trek through denser areas of the forest or who camp close to forested areas. Most cases occur during June and July, with a lesser increase in October.

Following medical advice received by the International Office it is recommended that Scouts visiting high risk areas and taking part in such activities should be vaccinated against this risk.

Your General Practitioner will advise on the advisability of receiving the vaccination.

A vaccine is available (through a General Practitioner) from Immuno Limited, Arctic House, Rye Lane, Dunton Green, near Sevenoaks, Kent, TN41 5HB (Tel: 01732 458101).

The recommended schedule for vaccination is two doses (0.5 ml each) by intramuscular injection, separated by an interval of 1-3 months. This will give protection which lasts for a few months only. If longer protection is required, a third dose should be given 9-12 months after the second dose, with booster doses every three years to maintain protection. Early contact with your GP is necessary in order to obtain vaccine and injection to the recommended schedule. There have been no reported cases among those who have been vaccinated and there are no side effects.

Although it is possible to have a post exposure prophylaxis with a specific immunoglobulin (within 96 hours), this should be considered as an emergency measure only, since it gives only partial protection and involves a painful injection.

The following practical precautions should be taken to avoid infection:

- Use woodland paths free of grass and shrub when walking in the forest.
- Wear stout shoes or boots and thick socks or stockings.
- Use insect repellent creams.
- Boil unpasteurised milk from sheep or goats as this may occasionally be a vehicle of infection.

Information source: Public Health Laboratory Service.