

Media statement

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Stay healthy this Easter holiday period

As many of us set off on a well-deserved break over the Easter period, it's important to remember if you are jetting off to an overseas location you need to consider your health before you leave.

Sunshine Coast public health physician Dr Andrew Langley said you must do your research before you go and then keep an eye on your health when you return.

"The risk of contracting an infectious disease differs greatly depending on where you are travelling to, what you plan to do while you are there and your individual risk factors," Dr Langley said.

"For example, if you are planning to do an outdoor activity like hiking or eating out at dusk, mosquito exposure must be considered. In some countries they can carry serious diseases including malaria, dengue fever and yellow fever.

"The most reliable way to make sure you don't catch a mosquito-borne disease is to wear a mosquito repellent containing DEET or picaridin which will help avoid being bitten by a mosquito," he said.

You should also:

- Wear light coloured, long-sleeved clothes when you're outdoors
- Avoid wearing perfume or cologne (some of these can attract mosquitoes)
- Prevent mosquitoes entering your accommodation where possible
- Use a mosquito net at night-time (if mosquitoes are likely to be present)

"Rabies is another consideration. It is found in most countries outside Australia and New Zealand. It spreads through bites or scratches from infected animals. The greatest risk is posed by the types of animal's people interact with commonly, such as dogs, but also includes monkeys, bats and rodents," Dr Langley said.

"People are often under the misconception that the animal will behave differently or seem unwell if they have the Rabies virus but this is not the case. If you are bitten or scratched by any animal while overseas it is important to thoroughly wash the bite or scratch with soap and water for at least five minutes and then apply an alcohol or iodine-based disinfectant and seek medical attention as soon as possible," he said.

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“If you exposed to an infectious disease it can take time to feel unwell, it is important to pay close attention to your health, and if you become unwell in the two weeks after your return to Australia, it’s advised you see your doctor.”

Further information on health risk associated with many destinations can be found at www.smartraveller.gov.au

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