



# Travel health update

Travel health can be complicated, and advice for health professionals and travellers is ever-changing. In this regular feature, Jane Chiodini seeks out and presents the latest travel advice and information to help you to keep your practice up to date. She also revisits areas of on-going concern, for spot-checks and further clarification

## MOSTLY MALARIA!

The Faculty of Sexual & Reproductive Healthcare within the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists has recently published *Clinical Guidance for Drug Interactions with Hormonal Contraception*. Of relevance to travel health, the document states that 'additional contraceptive precautions are not required during or after courses of antibiotics that do not induce enzymes when taken with combined hormonal methods'. Therefore, the current advice we give women on the combined oral contraceptive pill (COCP) is that it is no longer necessary to take additional precautions for 3 weeks after starting doxycycline for malaria chemoprophylaxis. However, remember that if the antibiotics and/or any illness causes vomiting or diarrhoea, then the usual additional precautions relating to these conditions must be observed. (Note: doxycycline never reduced the effectiveness of the progesterone-only pill, so this advice was only for COCPs.)

Many travellers visit us with intentions of becoming pregnant on their holiday. Such action is not advised, especially if visiting a destination with a high risk of contracting chloroquine-resistant falciparum malaria. The recommended interval between finishing antimalarials and trying to conceive is 3 months following mefloquine, 1 week following completion of doxycycline and 2 weeks following the

completion of atovaquone/proguanil. Further information is available on page 119 of the UK *Yellow Book*, Health Information for Overseas Travel (see [www.nathnac.org](http://www.nathnac.org) for details) and page 66 of the *UK Guidelines for Malaria Prevention in Travellers from the United Kingdom* (downloadable from [www.malaria-reference.co.uk](http://www.malaria-reference.co.uk))

## ON-LINE PHARMACY REGISTRATION

Caution must be used in the purchase of malaria chemoprophylaxis on the internet. The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) has taken steps to assist the



general public in purchasing safe and genuine medicines online. Prospective purchasers

should look for the Internet Pharmacy Logo. All pharmacies in Great Britain, including those providing internet services, must be registered with the GPhC. Only registered pharmacies who offer professional services via the internet can use the Internet Pharmacy Logo. The logo not only provides a visual means to help patients identify whether a website is connected to a registered pharmacy, but also will provide a direct link to the GPhC website. By clicking on the logo, visitors can verify the registration details of both the pharmacy and the pharmacist(s) behind the website. For more information go to [www.pharmacyregulation.org/regulatingpharmacy/registration/internetpharmacy/index.aspx](http://www.pharmacyregulation.org/regulatingpharmacy/registration/internetpharmacy/index.aspx)

## BEWARE FAKE ANTIMALARIALS

Malaria chemoprophylaxis is generally not available on an NHS prescription.

Travellers often complain about the price they may have to pay for their tablets and some will tell us they intend to buy them abroad instead. The *UK Malaria Guidelines*

do not advise buying antimalarial drugs in this way, and also states that tablets purchased in the tropics may be fake. There is an excellent factsheet from the World Health Organization (no. 275 published in January 2010) that can help support you in this advice. One example given in this document was of an antimalarial found in 40 pharmacies in the United Republic of Tanzania in 2009 which lacked sufficient active ingredient. For more information go to [www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs275/en/index.htm](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs275/en/index.htm)

## FCO ON FACEBOOK

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has joined Facebook, making it easy to keep up to date on FCO activity. Just over the past week, for example, the FCO has posted information about a new system to be rolled out for the passport service, a checklist for the gap-year traveller that is extremely comprehensive and leads the



reader to further excellent resources, and also a travel programme bringing safety advice into the classroom. This latter item provides course material for teachers and students alike. Re-launched with materials that have really been enhanced, the teaching materials include a lesson plan, holiday hotspots quiz and travel scenario cards. Extra material for student, in the form of videos and an interactive globe, really bring the learning experience to life. Go to [www.facebook.com/fcotravel](http://www.facebook.com/fcotravel) and [www.fco.gov.uk/schools](http://www.fco.gov.uk/schools)



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