

Advice for Travellers Who Visit Affected Areas of Tsunami and Earthquake in Asia

The Indonesian earthquakes and the Asian tsunami on 26 December 2004 have led to the death toll of over 80,000 reported in countries included Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, Myanmar, Maldives and even some countries in Africa.

Travellers going to the affected areas should be prepared for the after shocks and outbreaks of infectious diseases.

Travellers are also advised to observe the following advice before their visits:

I. Food and water

Only consume boiled / treated water and cooked food as the sources of water and food in the affected areas may be contaminated. This would reduce the risk of getting food poisoning, cholera and other food-borne diseases.

II. Treatment of water

Boiling

Boiling is the most reliable method to make water safe for drinking. Boil the water for 1 minute.

Chemical disinfection

When boiling is not feasible, chemical disinfection with iodine is an alternative method. There are two methods available:

- i) Add 5 drops of tincture of iodine (2%) into one litre of clear water or 10 drops into cold or turbid water. Wait for at least 30 minutes before drinking; or
- ii) Add tetraglycine hydroperiodide tablets into water and wait before drinking. Tablets may be obtained from some sporting stores or pharmacies. Follow the instructions of the manufacturers of these tablets.

Filters

Filters available in the commercial market may provide various degrees of protection against micro-organisms. Proper maintenance and changing of cartridges should be observed. Follow the instructions of the manufacturers of these filters.

III. Accommodation

Be prepared for the after shocks, tidal waves, flooding, landslides, falling objects, fire, electrical shocks, gas leakage. Stay in accommodation that is safe and secure. Beware of hanging objects. Stay away from buildings that have been damaged.

IV. Clothing

Wear long-sleeved clothing to prevent cold and mosquito bites. Many of the affected areas are also endemic in mosquito-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue fever. Use insect repellents containing DEET and mosquito nets.

V. Chemoprophylaxis / vaccination

Travellers should be aware of the risk of contracting food-borne, vector-borne and other types of infectious diseases in the affected areas. Common travel-related infectious diseases with prophylactic medications / vaccines available may include hepatitis A infection, typhoid fever and malaria. Travellers may consider these medications and vaccination before visit. They are also advised to consult travel health practitioners / medical practitioners for advice.

VI. Emergency contacts

Bring along a list of emergency contact numbers (e.g., local emergency numbers, airlines, hotels, tour guides, relatives and friends).

VII. Own safety and health

Always observe own safety and health as a high priority. Seek local medical advice immediately if any symptoms and signs e.g., fever, rash, diarrhoea developed. If symptoms develop within one month after coming back to Hong Kong, travellers should also consult medical practitioners and inform them of the past travel history.

VIII. Enquires

For enquiries or information on vaccines / chemoprophylaxis, travellers may contact their family doctors or Port Health Travel Health Centre of the Department of Health (Tel: 2961 8840). Travellers outside Hong Kong may also dial the IDD 24-hour hotline at 8103 1717 for health information.

Port Health Office
Department of Health
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