



spotlight on health

Travelers Beware: Hepatitis A and B May Await You

(NAPS)—Are you planning a trip to Africa or Asia? Maybe you have selected a Caribbean destination or are taking a European holiday. In preparing for a trip, travelers frequently get lost in the excitement of making flight and hotel reservations, buying guidebooks and planning agendas. Oftentimes, travelers do not think about potential health risks, including hepatitis A and B, that can be avoided with preventive measures.

Most people may not realize that hepatitis A and B are the two most common vaccine-preventable diseases for travelers. Hepatitis A is spread by the fecal-oral route through close person-to-person contact, or by ingesting contaminated food or water. Hepatitis B is a serious disease that can cause permanent liver damage, liver cancer and even death. The good news is now there is a convenient way to protect against both diseases with one vaccine. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration recently approved GlaxoSmithKline's *Twinrix*® [Hepatitis A Inactivated & Hepatitis B (Recombinant) Vaccine], the world's only combination hepatitis A and B vaccine indicated for use in adults 18 years and older, proven safe and effective in the prevention of hepatitis A and B.

In unvaccinated travelers, hepatitis A occurs 100 times more often than typhoid fever and 1,000 times more often than cholera. People who have hepatitis A are typically infected for two weeks before symptoms appear, returning from a trip infected and unknowingly spreading the disease to others. Eleven to 22 percent of adult hepatitis A patients require hospitalization and approximately 100 people in the U.S. die every year from this disease.

Hepatitis B is a serious disease, and can be 100 times more contagious than HIV. Hepatitis B can be spread through infected blood or body fluids, sexual contact, intravenous drug use, contact sports (via cuts and scrapes), body piercing and tattooing. Travelers may engage in casual sexual activities, excessive drinking, water activities and adventure sports, finding themselves at risk of acquiring the disease since such activities increase their chances for accidents or trauma. Receiving medical attention in endemic countries places the traveler at risk of contracting hepatitis B from contaminated



PLAN AHEAD—Proper immunization can help prevent diseases such as hepatitis A and B.

equipment and blood or infected healthcare workers.

"All travelers are at risk of contracting hepatitis A and B in the United States and abroad. Hepatitis does not discriminate; travelers are at risk of infection regardless of whether they stay at youth hostels or five-star hotels," according to Phyllis Kozarsky, M.D., Associate Professor of Medicine and Infectious Diseases at the Emory University School of Public Health. Approximately 50 percent of persons with hepatitis A and 25 percent of persons with hepatitis B have no known risk factor for their infection.

Twinrix is a safe and effective vaccine that provides protection against both hepatitis A and B. In fact, *Twinrix* offers more convenience, as it requires three shots, instead of five, to protect against both hepatitis A and B. The most common adverse events in clinical trials included soreness at the injection site, headache and fatigue.

When planning your next trip, make your health a priority—see your physician or a travel medicine expert before departing. Individuals who would benefit from vaccination include those who travel to areas such as Africa, Asia (except Japan), the Caribbean, South America, the Middle East and eastern and southern Europe. Plan ahead to get the proper immunizations to help prevent diseases such as hepatitis A and B from ruining your trip. For more information on hepatitis A and B prevention and *Twinrix*, access the World Wide Web at www.travelsafely.com or call 1-800-366-8900 ext. 5231.

Editors: For additional information and complete Twinrix prescribing information, call the GlaxoSmithKline Medical Information Department toll-free at 800-366-8900, extension 5231. Twinrix is manufactured by GlaxoSmithKline Biologicals, Rixensart, Belgium and distributed by GlaxoSmithKline, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709. Twinrix is a registered trademark of GlaxoSmithKline.