

# TRAVEL TO THE PRC, IMMUNIZATIONS, AND YOUR HEALTH

## GENERAL.....

GANSU, INC intends this document to be a guide for its volunteers traveling to the Peoples' Republic of China, specifically Gansu Province. It should not be utilized to replace discussion between the volunteer and his/her personal physician concerning health and immunization recommendations for the international traveler. There are many variables concerning health conditions in developing countries, and the recommendations may be altered from time to time concerning immunization requirements. It is mandatory, therefore, that the volunteer discuss these matters with a personal physician who is knowledgeable re: international travel, and/or a Department of Health in the state of residence of the volunteer. Final determination concerning immunizations to be administered requires mutual decision by the volunteer and the physician.

## IMMUNIZATIONS RECOMMENDED FOR CHINA.....

These vaccines or injections are not required by China as a condition of entry, but may be beneficial to protect the health of the volunteer.

1. **Diphtheria and Tetanus Vaccine:** These two diseases occur in all parts of the world, and a vaccination "booster" against both is recommended for all U.S. adults, regardless of travel, every 10 years. A booster is recommended earlier in cases where an individual sustains a severe wound (if it has been 5 years or longer since the last booster), therefore it is recommended that a diphtheria-tetanus booster be administered to all GANSU, INC volunteers if it has been 5 years or more since the last dose (it cannot be assumed that the vaccine would be available should one sustain a serious injury, therefore the recommendation for 5 years, not 10).

2. **Hepatitis A Immunization:** The risk of developing Infectious Hepatitis (Hepatitis A) is greatest in developing countries where the level of hygiene is not high. Hepatitis A Immunization is now available in two injections six months apart. Typically, immunity is conferred within two weeks after the first injection, though both are preferable. GANSU, INC recommends this series. A (less preferable) alternative is Gamma Globulin, also called "Immune Globulin", which is approximately 90% effective in preventing this disease. It is administered as a single injection, and should be given as close as possible to the date of China travel. The protective effect of the Gamma Globulin lasts only about 3 months.

3. **Hepatitis B Vaccine:** Serum Hepatitis, also called Hepatitis B, is transmitted through blood, serum, or sexual contact. Hepatitis B vaccine is recommended for short-term travelers to China, including Gansu Province, for GANSU, INC volunteers who have the possibility of contact with blood, or blood-borne products from the local population in Gansu. Adult vaccination consists of 3 injections, with the 2nd and 3rd doses given 1 month and 6 months after the 1st dose, respectively.

Optimal protection is not conferred until after the 3rd dose, however, the series should be started even if it cannot be completed prior to departure for China, because some protection is provided by 2, or even 1, dose.

4. **Typhoid Vaccine:** While Typhoid Fever is endemic in all of China, including Gansu Province, the vaccine is not greatly effective, and, in general, has not been recommended for GANSU, INC volunteers. Even travelers who have been vaccinated with Typhoid vaccine must exercise great caution in water and food choices (because the vaccine is only about 70% effective), therefore, it is felt that strict adherence to safe food and water usage is the most important method of protection against Typhoid Fever, and the vaccine may be avoided. Discussion with a State Health Department or personal Physician is important for the volunteer to determine whether or not this vaccine should be administered.

5. **Polio Vaccine:** In general, we have not recommended any additional protection for adults who have had a primary series of either oral or injected Polio vaccine. This matter should also be discussed with a personal physician before a final decision is made re: whether or not to have additional protection administered.

## **IMMUNIZATIONS NOT FELT NECESSARY FOR CHINA.....**

1. **Yellow Fever Vaccine.** The disease, Yellow Fever, does not occur in the Middle East or Asia.

2. **Measles, Mumps, and Rubella Vaccine.** While the risk of developing these diseases in China is probably greater than in the U.S., most adults have either been immunized against them already, or have had a verified case of the disease. If there is concern about any of these diseases, personal discussion with a Physician can be initiated about these vaccinations.

3. **Meningococcal Vaccine.** This vaccine is now officially recommended only for travelers to Nepal.

4. **Rabies Vaccine.** Pre-exposure rabies vaccination does not eliminate the need for additional therapy after a rabies exposure, and GANSU, INC personnel are, in general, not at great risk for exposure (as would be animal handlers or Veterinarians) from animal bites.

5. **Malaria Protection.** There is no Malaria in the dry, high altitude, of Gansu Province in China.

## **MEDICAL HINTS AND PRECAUTIONS.....**

1. **Prevention of Foodborne Diseases:** The following precautions are generally recommended to help prevent foodborne disease while travelling in China, especially in Gansu Province:

- a. Do not eat raw vegetables or fruits unless they can be peeled, and you peel them yourself. Avoid green leafy vegetables.
- b. Do not eat raw or rare meat.
- c. Do not eat raw fish.
- d. Avoid milk or dairy products (including soft cheese and ice cream).
- e. Avoid eating food purchased from street vendors.
- f. Eat well-cooked foods which are still hot.

2. **Prevention of Waterborne Disease:** The following precautions are essential for China, in general, and Gansu Province in particular:

- a. With **very rare exceptions**, the water from the tap in all Chinese Hotels, Restaurants, and public buildings is not safe, and should not be consumed without treatment. GANSU, INC knows only two Hotels (the GARDEN, in Shanghai, and the GREAT WALL HOTEL in Beijing) where the tap water is safe to drink. In all other places, you will be provided boiled water in large thermos containers. It should be utilized for all of your consumable water needs, including toothbrushing!
- b. Safe alternatives to tap water are: drinks made with boiled water (coffee, tea, soup, etc.); and canned or bottled carbonated drinks (Coke, Sprite, etc.) Bottled mineral water has been utilized by GANSU, INC volunteers without untoward affects, however, it has been noted to be of varying taste and quality, and could be suspect.
- c. Avoid ice, unless it is confirmed to have come from boiled or known safe sources.

## **AFTER YOUR TRIP.....**

Most illnesses acquired abroad will manifest themselves during the trip or shortly after its termination. If, however, a disease develops during the year after your return, be certain that your Physician knows of your foreign travel in China. The following symptoms, occurring after your trip to China, should signal the necessity for an exam by your Physician:

- Prolonged fever.
- Fatigue.
- Persistent (or bloody) diarrhea.
- Progressive weight loss despite good food intake.
- Severe or persistent pain in the abdomen, chest, or head.
- Rash, which does not disappear within a week.

At the present time, NO vaccinations are required for travelers **returning** to the United States from any country in the world.

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