

News Release

For Immediate Release

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Contact: Melissa Propp, RN, Clinic Manager, 308-345-4223

Polio Advisory for Travel

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) encourages anyone planning to travel out of the country to make sure they are protected against polio. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recently elevated the polio risk to a Level Two Travel Advisory, meaning travelers should practice enhanced precautions for 41 countries in Europe, Africa, and parts of the South Pacific.

The Level Two Travel Advisory means polio is circulating right now in these countries. There is a risk of infection when traveling to these areas for someone who is not immunized against polio or has not fully completed the polio immunization series.

“If you or your family will be traveling out of the country this year, we encourage you to talk with your healthcare provider about what vaccinations or medicines you might need,” states Melissa Propp, Clinic Manager at SWNPHD. “Any children and adults traveling to a country with active polio cases should make sure they are up to date on their polio vaccine.”

Polio is a crippling viral illness that was very common in the United States and worldwide before 1955 when the polio vaccine was invented. Each year this illness paralyzed hundreds of thousands of children. A global effort to protect children from polio reduced cases 99%, and in 2020, polio had been eliminated from all but 2 countries. But now polio has begun to circulate more widely again.

Polio vaccine is regularly given at well child checkups at 2, 4, and 6 months of age, with a booster dose given at age 4 or 5 prior to the start of preschool or kindergarten. Adult travelers may be able to get the one-time booster dose of polio vaccine if they are traveling to a destination with circulating poliovirus, even if they have already finished the vaccine series.

“If you are an adult who is not completely vaccinated, talk to your healthcare provider about completing your polio series,” continued Propp. “Check the CDC travel website for each specific country you will visit.”

The travel guidelines at [cdc.gov/travel](https://www.cdc.gov/travel) cover what to consider to protect your health before traveling. This may include what mosquito protection you will need, what the recommendations are for drinking water, or if you may need to be prescribed any other medications such as malaria pills. Plan to receive your travel vaccines at least 2 weeks prior to your trip to allow your body to build immunity.

For more information on travel vaccines, call SWNPHD at 308-345-4223. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red

Willow counties. You can follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube or view the website at www.swhealth.ne.gov which contains many resources and additional information helpful to prevent disease, promote and protect health.

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