

## 134 THE WORLD'S MOST DANGEROUS PLACES

forecast. For example, by the year 2010, a Ugandan's life expectancy will decline by 45 percent to 32 years—down from the 59 years projected before AIDS. A Haitian's life expectancy will fall to 44 years, also down from 59 years. Life expectancy in Thailand will drop from a projected 75 years to 45. By the year 2010, Thailand's child-mortality rates are expected to increase from the current 20 deaths per 1,000 children born to 110 deaths. Thailand's population will actually fall by nearly 1 percent because of AIDS deaths. In Uganda, the jump will be from 90 deaths to 175 deaths out of every 1,000 children born. In Malawi, it will soar from 130 to 210 deaths per 1,000. Overall, premature death rates in those countries will double by 2010 compared with 1985 levels.

**"Zoonosis"**

According to journalists, AIDS first began near the Congo-Burundi border . . . but did it? A 1992 *Rolling Stone* article by medical journalist Tom Curtis places the blame on polio vaccines grown in primate kidney cells and then injected into humans in 1957 and 1958. Other researchers had injected malaria-tainted blood from chimpanzees and mangabeys into human volunteers. The first AIDS case was reportedly a British sailor (who had never been to Africa) who died in 1959. The case wasn't officially recognized by the Centers for Disease Control until 1981.

There is no hard proof that AIDS came from monkeys or even from Africa, but the preponderance of evidence shows that AIDS may have originated in Central Africa within the past 50 years. AIDS continues to mutate as new strains continue to appear in West Africa and Asia.

**Old-Fashioned Diseases**

Don't let the media hype and the fashion models fool you. Diseases like AIDS or Ebola are not only easily avoidable, it's a long shot even if you are in high-risk areas. There are plenty of dull, cocktail-party, free diseases that await you. Many travelers are quite surprised to find themselves coming down with measles or mumps while traveling. Unlike the United States, which has eradicated much of the childhood preventable viruses through inoculation, the rest of the world is more concerned about feeding than vaccinating their children. Whooping cough, mumps, measles, polio, and tuberculosis are common in the world countries. Although some of the symptoms are minor, complications can lead to lifelong afflictions. Make sure you are vaccinated against these easily preventable diseases.

But don't just run off to be the next bubble boy and spend the rest of your life in a hermetically sealed dome. For travelers, these diseases

relatively rare and avoidable. To put the whole thing in perspective, the most common complaint tends to be diarrhea, followed by a cold (usually the result of lowered resistance caused by fatigue, dehydration, foreign microbes, and stress). The important thing is to recognize when you are sick versus very sick. Tales of turn-of-the-century explorers struck down by a tiny mosquito bite are now legend. Malaria is still a very real and common threat. Just for fun, bring back a sample of local river water from your next trip and have the medical lab analyze it. You may never drink water of any kind again.

This is not to say that as soon as you get off the plane, you will automatically be struck down with Ebola River fever and have blood oozing out from your eyes. You can travel bug-free and suffer no more than a cold caused by the air-conditioning in your hotel room. But it is important to at least understand the relative risks and gravity of some diseases.

The diseases listed on the following pages are important, and you should be conversant with both symptoms and cures. Please do not assume that this is medical advice. It is designed to give you an overview of the various nasties that possibly await you. Tropical countries are the most likely to cause you bacterial grief. Keep in mind that most of these diseases are a direct result of poor hygiene, travel in infected areas, and contact with infected people. In other words, stay away from people if you want to stay healthy. Second, follow the commonsense practice of having all food cooked freshly and properly. Many books tell you to wash fruit and then forget to mention that the water is probably filled with more bugs than the fruit. Peel all fruits and vegetables, and approach anything you stick in your body with a healthy level of skepticism and distrust. If you are completely paranoid, you can exist on freeze-dried foods, Maggi Mee (noodles), fresh fruit (peeled, remember), and canned food: they can be boring, but are fine . . . unless, hey, didn't you just wash your spoon in the local water?

It is considered wise to ask local experts about dangers that await you. If you do not feel right for any reason, contact a local doctor. It is not advisable to enter a medical treatment program while in a developing country. There are greater chances of you catching worse afflictions once you are in the hospital. Ask for temporary medication and then get your butt back to North America or Europe.

**Hospital Web**

<http://adams.mgh.harvard.edu/hospitalwebworld.html>

**International health care links**

[http://www.healthcareland.com/SOS/embassy\\_links.htm](http://www.healthcareland.com/SOS/embassy_links.htm)

**Worst Case, You Can Always Try Humor Therapy**

<http://www.humormatters.com>