

# IN HEALTH

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## HOME HEALTH

Managing minor ailments

A Liberty publication



### WORLD TB DAY

Unite to end this curable disease

### DESTINATION AFRICA

Recommended vaccinations for travellers

### ENDING MALARIA

Making good on the gains

## Dear readers

Welcome to the latest edition of our *In Health* communication. The African continent is home to 54 independent countries, each of which has something different and dazzling to offer. But, as with any adventure destination, certain health precautions are recommended. *In Health* offers some tips to help travellers make the most of their visit. World TB Day is observed each year on March 24 to build public awareness around the disease. There have been some major advances since the World Health Organization (WHO) established a global TB monitoring system. Since 1990, TB mortality has declined by 47%, and between 2000 and 2014 the effective diagnosis and treatment of TB saved an estimated 43 million lives. On the last page of this newsletter, you will find our in-country contact details for our offices. Liberty Health currently provides industry leading pan-African healthcare solutions to over one million lives across 16 African countries. Should you find yourself in need of assistance with healthcare solutions, wherever you may be, please contact us and we will try to help you. Please feel free to share this newsletter and health insights with your family, friends and colleagues. You can access past editions on our website, [libertyhealthblue.com](http://libertyhealthblue.com). If you have any suggestions or input for our communications, please contact us at [inhealth@libertyhealthblue.com](mailto:inhealth@libertyhealthblue.com). We welcome your feedback.

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## SCIENCE SNIPPETS



### VICIOUS VIRUS

A mosquito-borne virus is causing concern in the Americas and beyond. The Zika virus is usually mild and self-limiting and takes between two and seven days to resolve. However, the World Health Organization declared a global health emergency due to the suspected link to thousands of cases of babies born with small brains (microcephaly) in Brazil. The Zika virus can be sexually transmitted. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention therefore recommends that a man who lives in a Zika virus zone should use a condom every time he has sex. If he has left the Zika area but was diagnosed with the virus or had the symptoms, he should continue to use condoms for another six months. If he has travelled to a Zika zone but developed no symptoms, he should still use condoms for eight weeks after leaving the area.

### BROKEN HEARTED

Losing a loved one can literally break your heart, according to a new study. Using data from almost one million people, researchers found a link between the death of a spouse or life partner and the development of an irregular heartbeat in the grief-

stricken people. This condition increases a person's risk of heart attack or stroke. The Danish study, published in *Open Heart*, found the risk of atrial fibrillation was 41% higher among people mourning the death of their partner, compared to others who were not grieving. When

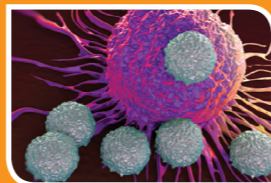
the death of an otherwise healthy partner was least expected, the risk was 57% higher. People younger than 60 were more than twice as likely to develop atrial fibrillation if they lost their partner. The risk peaked between eight to 14 days after the death, and then subsided after 12 months.

### TANTALISING T-CELLS

An exciting new development in cancer research is showing extraordinary results in the treatment of leukemia. Experimental therapy at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle found that 94% of the 35 terminally ill patients treated went into remission. The treatment uses a patient's own immune cells and tricks

them into fighting cancer. T-cells are removed from the body and modified with molecules from genetically engineered mice called chimeric antigen receptors, or CARs. The cells are then put back into the body and the CARs work to lower the cancer's ability to shield itself from the patient's natural immune system. In this way, the T-cells can then attack the cancer.

The T-cell treatment works best with blood cancers rather than tumors, but doctors are hopeful that the treatment option will be available for more patients, including those with other types of cancer, within the next three to five years.



(Sources: [bbc.com](http://bbc.com), [cbsnews.com](http://cbsnews.com), [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov), [techtimes.com](http://techtimes.com), [telegraph.co.uk](http://telegraph.co.uk), [who.int](http://who.int))

# UNITE TO → END TB

More than two billion people – around one quarter of the world's population – are infected with TB.

Despite being curable, TB remains one of the world's top health challenges. With this in mind, World TB Day is observed each year on March 24 to build public awareness around the disease. There have been some major advances since the World Health Organization (WHO) established a global TB monitoring system. Since 1990, TB mortality has fallen by 47%. The effective diagnosis and treatment of TB saved an estimated 43 million lives between 2000 and 2014. And globally, TB incidence has decreased by an average of 1.5% per year since 2000, and it is now 18% lower than the level of that year.

That said, TB claimed the lives of 1.5 million people in 2014, and it now ranks alongside HIV as a leading cause of death worldwide. In that same year, 9.6 million people around the world were estimated to have fallen ill with TB – 5.4 million men, 3.2 million women and one million children. Only six million new cases of TB were reported to WHO, which is less than two-thirds of the number of people estimated to have fallen sick with the disease. This means that 37% of new cases were either unreported or undiagnosed. There were an estimated 480,000 cases of multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB), and

only around one quarter of these were detected and reported. The reason so many infected people were missed can be put down to four main problem areas:

- Insufficient access due to the distance to care, poverty, stigma, limited facilities, financial barriers and conflict
- Poor diagnosis due to undertrained staff, inaccurate tests and lack of equipment
- Poor documentation due to weak reporting and a lack of case notification
- No treatment due to drug stockouts and poor links between services.

One person with TB can infect up to 10 people a year, so it is important to find and treat these people.

In Africa, over half a million people were thought to have died from TB in 2013. The TB epidemic on the continent is largely fuelled by poverty and the simultaneous infection with HIV. Poor people living with HIV are more likely than others to become sick with TB. But there is some good news in the region. The rising trend of TB cases has been halted and continues to decline as the treatment success rate improves. Equally, the death rate as well as the number of people who fail to complete their TB treatment continues to decline.

It is clear that the work already done in the fight against TB needs to continue to reduce the burden. Gaps in detection and treatment must be addressed, and new tools developed. In addition, more money is needed – gaps in funding to implement existing interventions amounted to US\$1.4 billion in 2015. From this year, the goal is to implement WHO's End TB Strategy. This is a blueprint for countries to reduce the number of TB deaths by 90% by 2030 (compared with 2015 levels), cut new cases by 80% and ensure that no family is burdened with catastrophic costs due to TB.

(Sources: [stoptb.org](http://stoptb.org), [who.int](http://who.int))

## GLOBAL NUMBERS

**24,000**

New TB cases a day

**8,000**

TB cases missed a day

**4,000**

People who die of TB a day

**1,315**

New drug-resistant TB cases a day

**219**

Children who die of TB a day



# AFRICAN HEALTH CHECK

The African continent is home to 54 independent countries, each of which has something different and dazzling to offer. *In Health* offers some tips to help travellers make the most of their visit.

Africa has it all – from deserts to mountains, and rainforests to beaches. Travellers can climb Africa's largest peak, Kilimanjaro, or go skiing in the Atlas Mountains in Morocco. They can witness one of the world's greatest animal migrations through the Serengeti and the Masai Mara reserves or visit the magnificent mountain gorillas in the highlands of Uganda, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. They can discover the world's oldest desert, the Namib, or adventure across the largest hot desert in the world, the Sahara. And that's just the beginning. But, as with any adventure destination, certain health precautions are recommended. For example, visitors should be cautious about what they eat and drink, and beware of the sun. Malaria is rife in many parts of Africa – see malaria information at the end of this article. In malaria-endemic areas, your best form of protection is to avoid mosquito bites by sleeping under nets and using insect repellent. Anti-malarial medication is also available, but you should consult your doctor for more information. Vaccination requirements change so it's worth checking with your doctor before you leave. However, there are some basic guidelines you should consider. Check your childhood inoculations are up to date and get boosters if required. Legally, you don't need any vaccinations, except yellow fever in some areas, but it's worth noting that vaccines are the best protection against the following diseases that are common in parts of Africa.

## HEPATITIS A AND HEPATITIS B

Hepatitis A is transmitted through contaminated food and water. Vaccination against Hepatitis A is safe and effective, virtually eliminating the risk of contracting the disease. Hepatitis B is a serious viral illness that

is transmitted through blood products, contaminated medical instruments and unprotected sex with someone who is already infected with the virus.

## YELLOW FEVER

Yellow fever is a serious viral disease transmitted via infected mosquitoes. The disease varies from mild to severe, causing liver failure. Yellow fever can be prevented by vaccination and avoidance of mosquitoes. Proof of vaccination against yellow fever is required for travel to and from some African countries. This vaccination is covered by Liberty Health Cover.

## TYPHOID

Typhoid fever is a bacterial infection that is transmitted by contaminated food and can spread throughout the body, affecting many organs. It is most common in parts of the world that have poor sanitation and limited access to clean water, and it is highly contagious.

## MENINGITIS

Meningococcal meningitis is a very serious bacterial infection of the tissues that line the brain. It is transmitted from person to person through respiratory secretions and saliva. The disease occurs everywhere in the world but its incidence is highest in parts of sub-Saharan Africa.

## DIPHTHERIA, POLIO AND TETANUS

A combination vaccine is available for these three infections. Diphtheria is a serious bacterial infection usually affecting the mucous membranes of your nose and throat.

Polio is a highly infectious disease caused by a virus that invades the nervous system and can cause irreversible paralysis. It is spread from person to person and through contaminated food and water.

Tetanus is a serious but rare condition caused by bacteria getting into a wound.

## CHOLERA

Cholera is an acute intestinal infection caused by ingestion of contaminated food or water. Vaccination against cholera is not necessary for most travellers, but it may be recommended for those travelling to areas with limited access to medical services.

## RABIES

Rabies is transmitted by a bite or scratch from rabid infected animals. Shots aren't compulsory and the likelihood of catching it is low. However, visitors to rural areas in close contact with animals should consider receiving a vaccination.

(Sources: cnn.com, fitfortravel.nhs.uk, huffingtonpost.com, nhs.uk, travelclinicsofamerica.com, travelvaccines.com.au, usatoday.com)

## END MALARIA FOR GOOD

**Great progress has been made in the fight against malaria**, but the battle will only be won when malaria is eliminated worldwide. **Between 2000 and 2015**, the global malaria mortality rate fell by 60%, and the number of malaria cases dropped by 37%. **The gains in prevention, diagnosis and treatment** need to be backed up by more funding. A lack of money threatens to slow down progress, particularly across Africa where high-burden countries are facing critical funding gaps. **About 3.2 billion people** – almost half of the world's population – are at risk of malaria. **In 2015, 97 countries** had on-going malaria transmission. 35% of malaria deaths occur in just two countries: Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. **In 2014, the global total** of funding for malaria was US\$ 2.5 billion – less than half of what is needed.

## MALARIA NUMBERS

**214 million**  
malaria cases globally  
in 2015

**438,000**  
The number of deaths  
around the world

**90%**  
of deaths occur in  
sub-Saharan Africa

**78%**  
of deaths are children  
under five

(Source: worldmaliaday.org)



# DIY DOCTOR

Not all conditions demand a visit to your doctor. Some common complaints can easily be treated at home with the help of your pharmacist.



## HEADACHES

Headaches usually fall into three main categories – tension, sinusitis or migraine.

Tension headaches are generally caused by tiredness or stress and result in a dull ache in the head.

Colds, flu, allergies and infections can cause sinusitis. When mucus is unable to drain, pressure builds up in your head.

Migraines are usually severe, with a throbbing pain at the front or side of the head. Some experience other symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting and increased sensitivity to light or sound as well.

### What should you do?

In most cases, you can treat your headaches at home with over-the-counter painkillers.

Lifestyle changes also help, such as getting more rest and drinking more fluids.

If you experience a change in the type or severity of headache, then you should consider consulting your doctor.

## THE COMMON COLD

Most colds are caused by rhinoviruses that are carried in invisible droplets that infiltrate the nose and throat linings. They are found in the air we breathe and on things we touch and are difficult to avoid.

Usually, colds begin a couple of days after infection with the virus. Typical symptoms include a scratchy sore throat, sneezing, a runny nose and a mild cough.

### What should you do?

There is no medicine to treat the virus, but you can treat the symptoms.

Your pharmacy will have medicines like decongestants (that dry mucus and shrink swollen nasal passages) and expectorants (that loosen respiratory tract secretions), as well as something for pain or fever relief. Try to rest as much as possible and drink lots of fluids. Keep your head propped up on pillows when you sleep to ease congestion. You should not need to consult a doctor unless your symptoms do not improve in 10 days, or you start to develop secondary symptoms like ear infections or pneumonia.

## COUGHS

A cough is a reflex action to clear your airways of mucus or things like smoke or dust.

You can have a dry cough that tickles and does not produce thick mucus or phlegm, or a chesty cough that produces phlegm.

Coughs can be caused by a number of things like infections of the upper or lower respiratory tracts, allergies, sinuses, asthma, postnasal drip, smoking and dusty environments.

### What should you do?

Most coughs are caused by viruses and sort themselves out within a few weeks. As with the common cold, look after yourself by resting, eating well and drinking lots of liquids. Taking painkillers may help relieve some symptoms, and there are various cough medicines available at pharmacies. Most coughs should not last longer than three weeks. Consider seeing a doctor if your cough persists or it gets worse, or if other

symptoms, such as coughing up blood or having difficulty breathing, develop.

## SORE THROATS

Pharyngitis is the inflammation of the pharynx, which leads to a sore throat. Viruses cause the vast majority of sore throats, but many things (e.g. mucus dripping into your throat, allergies, pollution, smoking) can also cause them.

A strep throat is caused by bacteria, and has more serious symptoms like fever, enlarged lymph nodes and white patches in your throat.

### What should you do?

Treatment will depend on the cause. If it is bacterial, your doctor may give you an antibiotic. If it is allergy related, he or she will need to determine the cause of your allergy. If it is viral, it usually goes away on its own. However, there are a few things you can do to ease the pain – take painkillers, buy throat lozenges or sprays, gargle with salt water, drink warm drinks like lemon and honey tea. If your sore throat persists longer than a week, you develop a high fever or you are struggling to swallow, consult your doctor.

## NAUSEA, DIARRHOEA AND VOMITING

Upset stomachs, including nausea, sickness and diarrhoea, can be caused by a range of infections, including a virus, food poisoning and ingestion of toxins.

Things like alcohol, medication, motion sickness and pregnancy can also cause nausea and vomiting.

### What should you do?

The best solution is to rest your stomach for at least an hour and then try to drink small amounts of water or rehydration fluid. You can add solids at a later stage, but avoid dairy products.

Vomiting and diarrhoea can become serious conditions, especially for children and the elderly, when dehydration (a loss of bodily fluids and associated electrolytes) occurs. Check in with your doctor if vomiting and diarrhoea are particularly severe or frequent.

## BURNS

Burns are fairly commonplace and action needs to be taken according to the degree of damage.

First-degree burns are superficial, with damage on the surface. The skin goes red and is mildly painful.

Second-degree burns are more painful. The damage has gone deeper and causes blistering.

Third-degree burns are when the damage has gone through all the flesh. The skin becomes white or charred black and they can be less painful or completely numb.

### What should you do?

Most minor burns will heal on their own, and home treatment is usually enough.

First cool down the affected area with cold water. If the skin is not broken, do not cover with a bandage or put cream on, as it will heal better in the open air.

If you are unsure how serious your burn is, visit a pharmacist for an assessment.

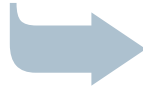
(Sources: [integratedcarepartnership.co.uk](http://integratedcarepartnership.co.uk), [nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk](http://nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk), [nhs.uk](http://nhs.uk), [mccartans.ie](http://mccartans.ie), [smu.edu](http://smu.edu), [webmd.com](http://webmd.com))



# LIBERTY HEALTH COVER

## FIGHT THE FLU & PROTECT YOURSELF

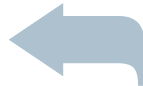
Most people who get the flu will not need medical care and will recover in less than two weeks.



But some people may suffer complications like pneumonia, bronchitis, sinus and ear infections.



A flu jab gives good protection against seasonal flu and reduces the risk of complications.



The flu can also make chronic health problems worse.

## HIGH-RISK FLU CATEGORIES

- Sufferers of any ongoing lung disease, including chronic bronchitis, emphysema, cystic fibrosis and severe asthma
- Sufferers from a chronic heart disease, including angina, heart failure or if you've had a heart attack
- Those with diabetes
- Those with a compromised immune system, e.g. from HIV/Aids or chemotherapy or steroid treatment
- Those with a serious kidney or liver disease.

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