

# Healthy Life

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Local orthodontist works with kids

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# An extra needle on the compass



Kelly Reeve, center, and her children, Joshua Reeve, 10, and Meghan, 11, of Wilton, get vaccination advice from Jeanne Steinmetz, Advanced Practice Registered Nurse, at the Visiting Nurse Association Travel Clinic in Danbury.

*"People think that they can go on vacation and nothing will happen. But you're not immune to these things."*

**Jeanne Steinmetz**  
Head of Danbury Visiting Nurse Association's travel/immunization clinic

## Travel tips

- Talk to a travel health expert at least six weeks before you leave.
- Let your body adjust once you arrive.
- Protect against insect stings.
- Never go barefoot, even on the beach.
- Make sure your water has been purified.
- Eat only well-cooked food.
- Wash and peel all fruits and vegetables.
- Fill your prescriptions before you leave — they may not be available where you are going.
- Don't swim in rivers, lakes or streams.
- Be careful about your means of transportation.

Source: TravelWise

## Further reading

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has a section on its Web site — [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel) — that tells people about medical issues in the countries they plan to visit.
- The World Health Organization also has information about outbreaks and illnesses abroad, including a book on medical issues and international travel. To see it, go to the World Health Organization's Web site at [www.who.int/topics/travel/en/](http://www.who.int/topics/travel/en/)
- To schedule an appointment at the Danbury Visiting Nurse Association's travel clinic call 203-792-4120 and press "0." The VNA schedules only by appointment and only with a doctor's prescription.
- To schedule an appointment with the Danbury Hospital travel health clinic, or for more information, call (203) 739-6542 or e-mail [Emp-Health@danhsosp.org](mailto:Emp-Health@danhsosp.org).

## Tropical facts

For every 100,000 people traveling to the tropics:

- 45,000 will have some health problem.
- about 35,000 will get travelers diarrhea.
- about 8,000 will be sick enough to seek medical help during or after the trip.

Source: TravelWise

## Vaccinations provide essential protection for international travel

By Robert Miller  
STAFF WRITER

DANBURY — For the Reeve family, a trip to India will give their kids a window to a world far removed from their home base in Wilton.

"It's such a wonderful experience," said Kelly Reeve. "I know because I went last October."

But before hitting the crowded streets of Mumbai, or tasting the salt in the breezes of the Maldiv Islands, Kelly Reeve and her two children — Meghan, 11, and Joshua, 10, — made a less-than-exotic, but nevertheless crucial, stop at the Danbury Visiting Nurse Association's office here.

There, the two kids got hepatitis A and typhoid vaccinations, the better to ward off the serious illnesses that can crop up in some countries, including India. Under a sign saying "The Caribbean is Amazing. Typhoid fever is not," the two kids got properly shot up.

"I'm looking forward to the trip," Joshua said. "Except for the needles."

For anyone traveling abroad to certain countries, the Reeves' experience is a common one.

For all its health care system woes, the United States has both a temperate climate and the money to keep most epidemics in check. For other countries — in South America, Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia — the dangers of contracting a serious illness loom larger.

"They won't even give you a visa to Nigeria without a yellow fever vaccine," said Rich Rardin in Newtown, who is going to that country under the auspices of the Walnut Hill Community Church in Bethel to train pastors.

Rardin was at the Danbury VNA to get the full course: six shots that would guard him against hepatitis A and B, typhoid, yellow fever and tetanus.

"I need the whole works," Rardin said.

In a highly mobile society, services like the one offered by the Danbury VNA, which opened in June, 2007, are becoming increasingly necessary.

"We began offering these vaccinations on our Wellness on Wheels van," said Jeanne Steinmetz, the head of the



Registered Nurse Karen Wood gives Joshua Reeve, 10, of Wilton a hepatitis A vaccination with assistance from Jeanne Steinmetz, Advanced Practice Registered Nurse, at the Visiting Nurse Association Travel Clinic in Danbury.

VNA's travel/immunization clinic, which is open Tuesday afternoons. "It grew so popular we decided to make it into its own clinic."

The clinic, a member of the International Society of Travel Medicine, offers non-travel immunization for illnesses like shingles, chicken pox and measles/mumps/rubella. But it also offers vaccine for less-common diseases.

"Sometimes, doctors can't get these vaccines," she said.

Travel clinics must attend to business travelers like Rardin, and va-

cationing families like the Reeves. But in a worldly city like Danbury, there's a lot of travel to visit families who live a continent or two away.

"We've been giving a lot of yellow fever vaccine to people going to Brazil, because there's been an outbreak there," Steinmetz said.

Danbury Hospital has run its own travel clinic out of the Department of Infectious Diseases for several years. Andrea Falk, the nurse at the clinic, said the business differs, depending upon the time of the year.

"In January and February and March, we see more busi-

ness travelers. We've had a lot of business travelers going to India lately," she said. "Right now, we're seeing a lot of people going on vacation, or students going abroad for summer programs."

Falk said it's important to know not only where travelers are headed, but also what they will be doing and how long they'll be in the foreign country.

"We just had someone in who will be traveling as a support staff member for the U.S. Olympic Equestrian team," Falk said. "The team was going to Hong Kong. We vaccinated that patient against Japanese encephalitis because there might be a lot of mosquitoes around the horses."

The VNA clinic asks its patients to first check out travel Web sites, like those maintained by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Falk said a similar Web site run by the World Health Organization is a good place, as well.

"One site might have information the other doesn't," she said.

The Danbury VNA clinic doesn't give patients inoculations on a walk-in basis.

"We tell them to talk to their doctor first, come up with a plan, then see us," she said.

At Danbury Hospital, Dr. Ruth White superintends the travel clinic. Falk, the clinic's nurse, said it can give travelers some vaccinations without a physician's prior approval.

"It all depends," she said. "If they have medical issues, but want to go to a high-altitude country like Nepal, we might say 'Talk to your doctor first. There are reasons why maybe you shouldn't go.'"

But both Falk and Steinmetz said people should be aware that while travel may be infectious, so is dengue fever.

If you know you're going to some far-off clime, they said, you should begin planning early and get the vaccinations you need way in advance of the date of your departure.

"People think that they can go on vacation and nothing will happen," Steinmetz said. "But you're not immune to these things."

"They see the picture in the travel brochures," Falk said. "It looks so beautiful that's all they think about."

