



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services  
Division of Public Health • Epidemiology Section

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Beverly Eaves Perdue, Governor  
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### Haiti: Communicable Diseases of Public Health Importance

The following is a partial list of communicable diseases that might present in persons repatriated from Haiti. **If any of the following are suspected, local health departments are asked to report them to the Communicable Disease Control Branch Epidemiologist on-call at 919-733-3419 (24/7).**

- **HIV:** Haiti has a high prevalence of HIV infection. Repatriated persons with HIV will require immediate medical care and public health follow-up through the Health Department's usual process.
- **Tuberculosis (TB):** Rates of tuberculosis are very high in Haiti, and MDR-TB has been frequently reported. Repatriated persons with TB will require immediate medical care and public health follow-up through the Health Department's usual process.
- **Malaria:** Malaria (*P. falciparum*) occurs in all parts of Haiti, although the incidence is low. Malaria is always a serious and can be deadly. If repatriated persons become ill with a fever or flu-like illness within 1 year after returning home, they should seek immediate medical attention and should tell the doctor that they have recently been in Haiti. For assistance with the diagnosis or management of suspected cases of malaria, health care providers may call the CDC Malaria Hotline: 770-488-7788 (M-F, 9 am-5 pm). For emergency consultation after hours, call 770-488-7100 and ask to speak with a CDC Malaria Branch clinician.
- **Dengue:** Dengue is the most common cause of fever in travelers returning from the Caribbean. Dengue is caused by a virus transmitted to people by the bite of an infected mosquito. Symptoms of dengue include:
  - Fever
  - severe headache or pain behind the eyes
  - joint and muscle pain
  - rash
  - nausea/vomiting
  - hemorrhagic (bleeding) manifestations

Usually dengue fever causes a mild illness, but it can be severe and lead to dengue hemorrhagic fever (DHF), which can be fatal if not treated. People who have had dengue fever before are more at risk of getting DHF. There is no specific medicine to cure illness caused by dengue. Aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid), aspirin-containing drugs, and other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (e.g., ibuprofen) should be avoided because of the possibility of bleeding. Early recognition and treatment of severe dengue (e.g., signs and symptoms consistent with impending blood pressure failure) can reduce the risk of death. Health-care providers should consider dengue in the differential diagnosis of patients who have fever within 2 weeks after arriving from Haiti.

- **Other Infectious Diseases:**
  - **Typhoid fever:** Typhoid fever is a life-threatening illness caused by the bacterium *Salmonella* Typhi. Typhoid fever is more common in areas of the world where handwashing is less frequent and water is likely to be contaminated with sewage.





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- Persons with typhoid fever usually have a sustained fever as high as 103° to 104° F (39° to 40° C). They may also feel weak, or have stomach pains, headache, or loss of appetite. In some cases, patients have a rash of flat, rose-colored spots. The only way to know for sure if an illness is typhoid fever is to have samples of stool or blood tested for the presence of *S. Typhi*. Treatment should be closely monitored for the patient's response, and antimicrobial susceptibility testing should be done at a clinical diagnostic laboratory if needed.
- **Anthrax:** Anthrax occurs in Haiti and is primarily transmitted by direct contact with infected animals or with contaminated products from infected animals. Cases of cutaneous and inhalation anthrax have been reported among the local population. Symptoms of anthrax can occur within 7 days of infection and include: fever (>100° F) and chills or night sweats; cough; chest discomfort; shortness of breath; fatigue; muscle aches; sore throat followed by difficulty swallowing; enlarged lymph nodes; headache; nausea; loss of appetite; abdominal discomfort, vomiting, or diarrhea; a sore, especially on your face, arms, or hands that starts as a raised bump and develops into a painless ulcer with a black area in the center.
- **Hepatitis A:** Hepatitis A should be considered in any patient who develops an acute illness involving jaundice or elevated serum aminotransferase levels within two months after returning from Haiti.
- **Other parasitic diseases:** Intestinal parasites, lymphatic filariasis, and cutaneous larva migrans are endemic in Haiti.
- **Other gastrointestinal illnesses:** Bacterial and viral gastroenteritis are likely to be present as a result of infrastructure disruption and poor sanitation.
- **Other dermatologic disease:** Scabies and fungal infections are common in people who have been exposed to poor sanitary conditions.

### Pharmacy Tips

- Pharmaceuticals purchased in Haiti may not be under typical trade and generic names or dosages used in the US. Reference books for International Trade names are available, but are very expensive and not on hand in many pharmacies. If you come across a medication and you need to know what the US equivalent is, in many cases an internet search will reveal the information needed. If you are unsuccessful, the Campbell College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences Drug Information Center can look up the US name for you. They can be reached by phone at (800) 327-5467 or on the web at [http://campbellpharmacy.net/resources/drug\\_info\\_center.html](http://campbellpharmacy.net/resources/drug_info_center.html). The Carolinas Poison Center can also look up international trade names. They can be reached at 888-222-1222.
- Under the NC Pharmacy Practice Act, if a person is in need of an emergency supply of medications considered to be essential to the maintenance of life or continuous therapy of a chronic condition and they have their labeled medication bottle showing a US trade or generic name, they may take that bottle to any pharmacy and the pharmacist is authorized to provide up to a 90-day emergency supply of the medication. This one-time supply can be given provided that it is not for a Schedule II controlled substance and interruption of therapy might reasonably produce undesirable health consequences.

