



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Pre-departure Screening for Asylum Seekers and Refugees coming to Ireland.

September 2015

The Irish Health Services wish to ensure as best we can that asylum seekers and refugees coming to Ireland are fit to travel before they come to this country and that they will not pose an immediate threat to public health when they arrive in this country. Where possible, therefore, we require that such persons have a medical assessment /examination before they travel. However in context of war and difficult conditions in refugee camps or transit areas pre-departure screening for many of the conditions below should not prevent/ delay travel.

Fitness to Travel:

Adults:

A general medical history and examination should reveal whether a person has a potentially life threatening condition that may deteriorate and put them at risk while they are travelling. If an asylum seekers or refugee has an acute illness, s/he should receive diagnostic testing as required according to their signs and symptoms.

This should include mental health check – acute /chronic psychiatric conditions especially major psychosis and post traumatic stress.

Nutritional status should be checked and deficiencies highlighted.

Persons with an existing medical complaint should travel with at least one month's supply of their medications.

For **women of childbearing years**, their history and examination should confirm whether they are pregnant and, if so, what their due date is, whether they have received any antenatal care and whether they are aware of any complications with the pregnancy. Women who are 36 weeks or more pregnant, i.e. have a due date of four weeks or less at the time of their travel, ideally should not be allowed to travel until they have delivered and the child is at least four weeks old.

Children:

Similarly, for children, a general medical history and examination should reveal whether a child has a potentially life threatening condition that may deteriorate and put them at risk while they are travelling. The child should have weight and height measure to assess nutritional status. If an asylum seeker or refugee child has an acute

illness, s/he should receive diagnostic testing as required according to their signs and symptoms.

If possible, it would be helpful if the vaccination history of the child could be established as accurately as possible and recorded. The Irish Health Services are concerned to achieve and maintain as high a vaccination coverage for the vaccine-preventable diseases as is possible. Children arriving in Ireland will be offered vaccinations against the vaccine preventable diseases as soon as possible after arrival. It is helpful to have a record of the vaccines already received to avoid children receiving unnecessary additional doses of these vaccines.

It is essential to proactively offer Oral Polio vaccine OPV to all children and adults from at risk countries e.g Afganistan, Pakistan, Nigeria, Somalia, Ethiopia Syria, Iraq etc

Communicable Diseases:

Screening for communicable diseases should be undertaken prior to departure to avoid the patient's condition deteriorating while travelling and to reduce the risk of spreading the disease to others, while the asylum seeker or refugee is travelling.

Any acute communicable disease that is diagnosed pre-departure must be treated to the point of being non-transmissible before departure. Supervised treatment is preferable and the asylum seeker or refugee should be issued with a fitness to travel certificate before departure.

Recommended infectious disease tests to be performed before departure:

- TB – screening by Chest X-ray
- Full Blood Count – blood test, to include the haemoglobin
- Hepatitis B – blood test
- Hepatitis C – blood test
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella and Chicken Pox – vaccination history
- Screening for skin lesions – especially for Cutaneous Diphtheria
- Sexually Transmitted Infections - (STIs - Gonorrhoea, Syphilis, Chlamydia (not essential) and HIV) - screening for all adults.
- Malaria screening is only required when clinically indicated – (thick and thin blood film screening, if indicated by the history).

If a person is positive for any of these infections, they should be treated for them, as appropriate, and given Public Health advice on how to avoid spreading the infection to others but travel to Ireland not restricted.