

# Advisory and information sheet

## Polio outbreak in Namibia

There is currently an outbreak of wild poliovirus 1 in Namibia. As such we would like to provide the following information and advice:

### **Travellers to Namibia**

- 1) All travellers to Namibia (including returning residents) are advised to obtain a booster dose of polio vaccine at least 10-14 days before travelling. If travel will commence in  $\leq 10-14$  days individuals should still be immunized.
- 2) Travellers should always practice strict hand hygiene and use safe water sources.
- 3) Choice of vaccine: the trivalent oral polio vaccine (TOPV) is the most accessible polio vaccine in SA and will be provided free of charge at government clinics. The vaccine is safe. Vaccine associated paralytic polio is a very rare complication and occurs in 1 in 2-3 million doses in susceptible individuals only. The only absolute contraindication to vaccination with TOPV is in persons with severe humoral immunodeficiencies. These individuals can be vaccinated with the inactivated polio vaccine alone (available only on section 21 through the MCC) or using the combination Td and inactivated polio vaccine (tetanus, diphtheria and inactivated polio). Pregnant individuals who have essential travel to Namibia should receive an inactivated polio vaccine.

### **Individuals entering SA from Namibia (includes returning SA citizens and visitors to SA)**

- 1) These individuals should be advised to report to the nearest health care facility if they develop acute onset of paralysis (weakness or an inability to move any of the limbs) and to inform the health care worker of their visit to Namibia.
- 2) There is no role for vaccination of individuals from Namibia at border entry into South Africa. The vaccine will not prevent paralytic disease if individuals are already infected. Spread of infection can be prevented through scrupulous hand hygiene (washing hands with soap and water after using the toilet and before handling or preparing food) and always using a toilet or designated ablution facility to prevent faecal contamination of the environment. If these individuals are returning to Namibia they should be immunized before they return (see travellers above).