

HEALTH WARNINGS

By J A Rogers



Ciguatera

The Ciguatera toxin comes from an organism called Gambierdiscus Toxicus which attaches itself to algae around coral reefs in tropical areas all over the world. The toxin is not always present, but it can build up in fish over time and when the toxic fish is eaten, it can kill.

Larger reef fish are more likely to be toxic. Similarly, it builds up in humans who eat the fish, but it is not evident until a dangerous level of toxicity has been reached. At that time, a severe reaction can occur during which people with existing heart conditions are the most at risk. Initial symptoms include nausea, a tingly feeling all over and inability to differentiate hot from cold. These can reoccur for years after contamination.

There is no way to tell without testing, whether a fish contains the toxin, and it cannot be removed by any known means once contaminated. There are estimated to be more than 500 species of fish that carry the toxin in their systems. Ones more likely to contain Ciguatera are larger individuals of barracuda, amberjack, blackjack, mackerel, pompano, sea bass, snapper and grouper. There is no cure known presently, but atropine injections have been shown to help in some severe cases.

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Malaria

After heavy rains and especially after hurricanes, there is always the worry about increased numbers of mosquitoes and diseases they carry like malaria and dengue fever.

The National Academy of Sciences reports that scientists at the US Naval research center near Washington and the Biotechnology firm VICAL in California say they have developed an experimental vaccine more protective against Malaria than any other so far tested. By using the revolutionary approach of injecting a gene instead of the traditional form of the vaccine into animals, they say an immune response was produced in 68% of those tested.

Another malaria vaccine known as SPF-66 which has already undergone extensive human testing in Africa was developed by a Colombian scientist and has been reported by the World Health Organization in the British Journal Lancet to have been effective in reducing infection in 30 to 40% of cases. There are numerous other vaccines also undergoing testing by various research groups now that show promise of preventing the disease all together.

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A Chinese treatment for the malaria parasite in humans was recently tested by the National Scientific Research Center of Paris, France. The testing took place in Africa where 90 percent of the world's malaria cases occur and it was found to be 100 percent effective in eliminating the disease. The test was not conclusive however, as it was small and further testing is required. But scientists are optimistic that the drug called Pyronaradium will be very effective as an alternative treatment to traditional methods to which malaria is showing increasing resistance.

Dengue Fever

Dengue fever is on the rise in Latin America and the Caribbean and children are the most at risk. The disease is spread by mosquitos and the deadly hemorrhagic form of dengue is more rare. It is characterized by fever, headache, rash, severe joint and muscle pain, and in the worst cases, uncontrolled bleeding and death.

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Pneumonic Plague

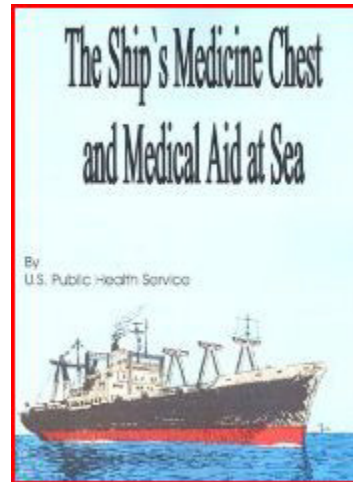
Pneumonic Plague which is a health problem in India where it is spread by a rat flea that also infects humans is also a threat in the Caribbean because of the high number of people traveling between India and the Caribbean. In the recent past, many have died from the disease on the island of St. Lucia where airline passengers arriving from India, and rodent control measures have been put in place. Advisories have also been posted for the US Virgin Islands by the US Centers for Disease Control.

Drug Smuggling and Anthrax in the Pearl Islands

When navigating in the Pearl Islands in the Bay of Panama be aware that those islands were used by the US military for chemical and biological weapons research during World War 2. Airstrips were built by the Pentagon on the islands to accommodate the military presence there. After the military left, the airports began being used by smugglers including some with connections to the CIA to move illegal drugs from South America to the United States. And waste materials left over from the military's chemical and biological research including anthrax were never removed.

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THE SHIP'S MEDICINE CHEST AND MEDICAL AID AT SEA is the definitive work on the subject and includes diagnosis and treatment of common ailments and injuries, drawings, photos, and tables of suggested drugs, and other medications and first aid supplies recommended to be carried aboard ship. Originally published for merchant seamen, this book is also a great reference for voyaging boaters and also for anyone in need of medical advice when not near a doctor.

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