



For Immediate Release

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News Release

Baxter launches TBE awareness campaign for Canadians travelling to Europe

TORONTO: Baxter Corporation (Canada) is launching a website, www.tbefacts.com, on June 1st to help Canadians who are planning travel to Central and Eastern Europe learn more about Tick-Borne Encephalitis (TBE) and how to prevent contracting this potentially life-threatening disease. TBE is transmitted by the bite of an infected tick during which contact time takes just one tenth of a second. According to the World Health Organization, TBE is a serious central nervous system disease, which may result in long-term neurological symptoms in patients, and even death.

Every year, TBE is detected in new regions of Europe and the Public Health Agency of Canada recommends that at-risk Canadian travellers protect themselves*.

Baxter is launching the website as part of an ongoing effort to raise awareness of the risk of TBE to Canadian travellers. In addition to the website, Baxter is participating at this year's International Society of Travel Medicine conference in Vancouver from May 20-24.

“With 10,000 cases reported each year, TBE has increased in Europe by almost 400 per cent in the last 30 years. TBE is now endemic in regions of 27 European countries, spreading from Sweden across to the Baltics,” says Dr. Jay Keystone, a travel medicine specialist with Medisys Travel Health Clinic and the Tropical Disease Unit at Toronto General Hospital.

Currently, TBE prevalence is particularly high in regions of Austria, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Germany, Switzerland, Hungary, Poland, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, and the Ukraine.

“TBE is a dangerous infection. Almost 1 per cent of people who acquire the infection could die and 30-50 per cent could develop permanent or prolonged neurological damage,” says Dr. Keystone. “As ticks are most active from spring through fall, Canadians need to understand now the importance of vaccination when travelling to avoid this serious risk.”

At-risk activities include hiking, biking, camping or picnicking in grasslands or woodlands. “All of these activities put you at risk of getting TBE because all of these activities put you at risk of getting a tick bite,” notes Dr. Keystone. TBE can also be contracted by consuming unpasteurized milk or milk products in endemic regions.

While there is no known treatment for someone infected with TBE, preventative measures can be taken. “Although travellers can protect themselves by using insect repellent, limiting exposed skin and avoiding unpasteurized milk, immunization is the most practical means to prevent TBE,” adds Dr. Keystone. “It can be given even to the last minute traveller. Two doses over two weeks gives almost 100 per cent protection.” Dr. Keystone notes that, “Immunization builds up specific antibodies which fight the infection caused by the bite of an infected tick, successfully preventing the spread of the virus within the body.”

In 2006, Baxter Corporation launched FSME-IMMUN in Canada, a vaccine that protects against tick-borne encephalitis. More than 85 million doses of FSME-IMMUN have been administered in more than 20 countries in Europe since 1979. FSME-IMMUN is the only TBE vaccine licensed and available in Canada.

Travellers can contact their physician or local travel clinic for information on immunization. More information is also available for travellers at www.tbefacts.com or by calling the FSME-IMMUN Support Program at **1-877-211-3582**.

ABOUT BAXTER

As a subsidiary of Baxter International Inc., Baxter Corporation (Canada) applies innovative science to develop specialty therapeutics and medical products that save and sustain patients' lives. Baxter's bioscience, medication delivery and renal products and services are used to treat patients with some of the most challenging medical conditions including cancer, hemophilia, immune deficiencies, infectious diseases, kidney disease and trauma. Learn more about Baxter Canada at: www.baxter.ca.

**Reference: Statement on TBE published on the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada's Committee to Advise on Tropical Medicine and Travel.*

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For more information, please contact:

Lan Lai-Minh, Baxter Canada, 905-281-6454

Michelle Brun or Jacqueline Zonneville, Karisma Communications, 416-663-1500, ext. 230 or 227