

Water Contact Diseases (Continued)

- Hospitalization of 1-7 days

Schistosomiasis – Wading, swimming in water contaminated with schistosoma parasites

- Threat – Typically April through November
- Symptoms – Mild infections are generally asymptomatic; febrile illness may occur with heavy infections.
- Heavy acute infections may require over 7 days of hospitalization.

Prevention – Do not swim/wade in unapproved water; wash skin and clothing after exposure to freshwater streams/ponds.

ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS

Short-term health risks

- Food contaminated with fecal pathogens
- Water contaminated water with raw sewage
- Extreme heat, high altitude, airborne sand

Long-term health risks

- Air contamination
- Chemical contamination of food and water

HAZARDOUS ANIMALS AND PLANTS

Venomous Snakes – High incidence of snakebite injuries in country; black snakes and vipers, well-camouflaged and aggressive, found country-wide. If bitten, seek urgent medical attention!

Prevention – Do not handle *any* snake.

Other Reptiles – Aggressive lizards, present in many habitats

Prevention – Do no feed or handle any animal.

Centipedes, Millipedes, and Solpugids – None with deadly venom but capable of inflicting painful bites or secreting fluids that can blister skin

Prevention – Shake out boots/bedding/clothing prior to use; never walk barefoot; avoid sleeping on the ground; seek medical attention if bitten.

Scorpions and Spiders – Some scorpions have potentially lethal venom; tarantulas, black widow spiders, and yellow sac spiders can deliver painful bites.

HAZARDOUS ANIMALS AND PLANTS (Continued)

Prevention – Shake out boots/bedding/clothing prior to use; never walk barefoot; avoid sleeping on the ground; use caution when entering abandoned buildings or bunkers; seek medical attention if bitten/stung.

Hazardous Plants – Toxic plants can cause skin/lung irritation if touched/burned and poisoning if chewed/eaten.

Prevention – Do not touch, chew, eat, or burn unfamiliar plants; wash contaminated skin/clothing after contact.

HIGH ELEVATIONS

Operations at 6,000 feet can impact unit and individual effectiveness.

Signs of **altitude sickness**: headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, fatigue, irritability, coughing

Acclimatization:

- Staged Ascent – Ascend to moderate altitude (5,000–8,000 feet) and remain there for 3 days before ascending higher.
- Graded Ascent – Limit daily altitude to allow partial acclimatization. Spend 2 nights at 9,000 feet and limit to no more than 1,000 feet per day above each night's sleep.

Treatment – The preferred method to treat any high altitude illness is to evacuate the individual to a lower altitude. See GTA 08-05-060, *A Soldier's Guide to Staying Healthy at High Elevations*.

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DEPLOYMENT HEALTH GUIDE: IRAQ



This country-specific guide should be used in conjunction with [GTA 08-05-062, *Guide to Staying Healthy*](#), and is intended to provide information that can help reduce your risk of Disease and Non-battle Injuries (DNBI) when deployed. This health threat and countermeasure information is based on the most current data available from U.S. Department of Defense medical agencies at the time of production. In addition to the information in this guide, you should also receive force health protection, health threat, and preventive medicine countermeasures training/briefings prior to and, as required, throughout the length of your deployment.

IRAQ OVERVIEW

Location – Iraq is in the Middle East and borders the Persian Gulf. It has a land area slightly larger than California.

Climate – Extremely hot and dry during the summer months (May–October) producing temperatures that can reach up to 122° F with an extreme evening low of 37° F. During the winter months (November–April), temperatures can reach a high of 109° F with an extreme evening low of 25° F.

Humidity – Highest humidity occurs during the wet season.

Rainfall – December through February is the wettest time of year. Precipitation is greatest in northeastern Iraq which receives an average of 15–19 inches of rain annually and snow up to 3 months a year.

Terrain – The Zagros Mountains located along the borders of Iran and Turkey consist of numerous peaks exceeding 10,000 feet. The Al-Jazira is a plain with some hills and low mountain ranges under 5000 feet. The northern and southern deserts are bare plains.

Forces of Nature – Dust storms and sandstorms occur year round.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Iraq is at **INTERMEDIATE RISK*** for infectious diseases. Without force health protection measures, mission effectiveness will be adversely impacted.

*Based on a combination of all major infectious diseases that occur in a country, the Armed Forces Medical Intelligence Center (AFMIC) assigns an **overall country risk level** of low, intermediate, high, or very high risk, as compared to other countries.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Food-borne and Water-borne Diseases

Consuming contaminated food, water, or ice

Hepatitis A – A potential attack rate of 1–10 percent per month among unvaccinated personnel could occur if local food, water, or ice is consumed.

- Threat year-round; countrywide
- Symptoms – none to flu-like illness
- Severe, 1–4 weeks recovery, sometimes initially requiring hospitalization

Food-borne and Water-borne Diseases (Continued)

Diarrhea, bacterial – A potential attack rate of over 50 percent a month if local food, ice, or water is consumed

- Threat year-round; countrywide
- Symptoms – loose, watery or explosive bowel movements
- Recovery of 1–3 days with antibiotics

Typhoid/Paratyphoid fever – A potential attack rate of less than 1 percent among unvaccinated personnel consuming local food, water or ice

- Threat year-round; countrywide
- Symptoms – fever, constipation, headache
- Hospitalization of 1–7 days

Prevention – Consume only U.S. military-approved food, water, ice; **hepatitis A vaccine** and/or **typhoid vaccine** if directed by medical authority.

Vector-borne Diseases

Leishmaniasis (cutaneous) – Small number of cases possible overall, but rate may be high in focal areas

- Greatest threat July–September; rural areas country-wide
- Symptoms – Non-healing skin ulcers that appear 1 week to 6 months following infection
- Transmission – Sand flies that bite mainly at night
- Not usually debilitating but requires non-urgent evacuation, often with prolonged inpatient treatment

Others – Rare or undetermined number of cases could occur: **Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever** (tick-borne); **leishmaniasis (visceral)** (sand fly-borne); **malaria** (mosquito-borne); **plague** (flea-borne); **Boutonneuse fever** (tick-borne); **sandfly fever** (sand fly-borne); and **West Nile fever** (mosquito-borne)

Prevention – **DEET** on exposed skin; **permethrin-treated uniforms**; **permethrin-treated bed nets**; **malaria prevention pills** if prescribed

Animal Contact Diseases

Rabies – Exposure to virus-laden saliva of an infected animal through a bite, scratch, or breathing airborne droplets; risk well-above U.S. levels

- Threat year-round; countrywide

Animal Contact Diseases (Continued)

- Initial symptoms – pain, tingling, or itching from bite site; chills, fever, muscle aches
- Death likely in the absence of post-exposure prophylaxis

Prevention – Avoid all animals; if scratched or bitten, seek medical attention immediately; pre- and/or post-exposure vaccinations if prescribed by medical authority.

Others – **Anthrax**, **Q fever**

Respiratory Diseases

Tuberculosis – Breathing contaminated air droplets from other people (coughing/sneezing)

- Highest threat from prolonged close contact with local populations
- Threat year-round; countrywide
- Symptoms – None to cough, chest pain, breathlessness, night sweats
- Severe illness or death if not treated

Prevention – Avoid close contact with local populations; early detection/treatment reduces severity.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Gonorrhea/Chlamydia – Unprotected sexual contact with infected person; high number of cases possible

- Threat year-round; countrywide
- Symptoms (in men) – None to burning sensation when urinating or discharge
- Symptoms (in women) – None to burning when urinating to increased vaginal discharge
- Mild; outpatient treatment

Others – **HIV/AIDS**, **hepatitis B**

Prevention – Abstinence; latex condoms; not sharing needles; **hepatitis B vaccine**

Water Contact Diseases

Leptospirosis – Wading, swimming, other contact with water/mud contaminated with infected animal urine; unknown number of cases could occur.

- Threat year-round; countrywide
- Symptoms – fever, chills, nausea