

Expats Guide to Living in Zambia



The general state of healthcare in Zambia is poor. Although there are adequate private health facilities in Lusaka, the public health system remains heavily underfunded, and many expats requiring serious medical attention will find themselves evacuated to another country, such as South Africa, where there are better medical facilities. It's essential that expats have a comprehensive health insurance policy before moving to Zambia.



991
Police Station



993
Fire Brigade



737
Ambulance



“Giving healthcare a human *touch*.”

HEALTHCARE IN ZAMBIA



Population
17 237 931



Currency
Zambian Kwacha



Language
English



Capital City
Lusaka

Public healthcare

Zambia offers universal healthcare to all its citizens. By Western standards this healthcare is very basic and Zambia's public healthcare system is chronically underfunded. Many Zambian doctors leave the country or work only for the private health system, meaning that public health is subject to a skills drain.



Private healthcare

There are good private hospitals in Zambia's larger cities, particularly Lusaka. These cater not only to foreigners but also to affluent Zambians. Expats living in mining communities and compounds owned by their organisation are likely to find company-sponsored clinics on-site that are able to cater for their basic medical needs. However, most expats are evacuated to South Africa or elsewhere in the case of long-term serious medical care being required.



Pharmacies

Although pharmacies are available in major towns and cities, they are not always well stocked and may not carry many of the usual drugs that expats may need. Pharmacies are generally open from Monday to Saturday, with very few operating on Sundays and none on a 24/7 basis. In the case of an emergency, expats should try pharmacies attached to hospitals or clinics.



Health insurance

It's essential that expats either ensure that any medical insurance cover from outside Zambia covers living in the country, or that medical insurance is taken out quickly on arrival. It is important that this medical plan is comprehensive, including cover for medical evacuations. This should be an essential part of contract negotiations when moving to Zambia.



Health hazards

Zambia is in the malaria belt and also a TB zone, so a doctor should be consulted before departure about appropriate medication. An essential purchase in Zambia is a mosquito net. These nets cover the bed at night and have a significant effect in reducing mosquito bites. Cholera and dysentery are also common, particularly during the rainy season. Zambia also has a very high prevalence of HIV/AIDS.

The water in Zambian cities is drinkable, but best avoided. Bottled water is widely available and the best option for new arrivals.



BACTERIAL AND PROTOZOAN DIARRHOEA

Hepatitis A

A viral disease that can manifest itself in water and food, principally located in areas of poor sanitation.

Victims exhibit fatigue, fever, abdominal pains, nausea, itching, diarrhoea, jaundice and depression thus the need for a vaccine.



Hepatitis B

An irritation and swelling (inflammation) of the liver due to the infection with the hepatitis b virus (HBV). Infections can be spread through blood transfusions, tattoo or acupuncture with unsterilized needles and instruments, sexual intercourse with an infected person, direct contact with blood in health care settings, shared items of an infected person; razor blades, toothbrushes and nail clippers and sharing needles during drug use. When one is first infected with hepatitis b virus, no symptoms may show initially and then you may feel sick over the next few days or weeks.

The body's immune system usually sends out white blood cells to fight off the infection but some bodies do not manage to completely get rid of the infection causing it to result into chronic hepatitis b. Chronic Hepatitis b victims exhibit no symptoms and may not even know they are infected and can still spread the disease to others. An effective vaccine is available as a series of three injections given over six months and lasts up to five years or possibly longer.



Typhoid fever

A bacterial disease usually spread through contact with food or water contaminated by faecal matter or sewage. The symptoms include sustained high fevers, diarrhoea, profuse sweating. If not treated, symptoms may progress to delirium, enlargement of the spleen and liver which can go on for four weeks and eventually result in death.

VECTOR BORNE DISEASES

Vector-borne diseases are infections transmitted by the bite of infected arthropod species, such as mosquitoes, ticks, triatomine bugs, sandflies, and blackflies. Arthropod vectors are cold-blooded (ectothermic) and thus especially sensitive to climatic factors. Weather influences survival and reproduction rates of vectors, in turn influencing habitat suitability, distribution and abundance; intensity and temporal pattern of vector activity (particularly biting rates) throughout the year; and rates of development, survival and reproduction of pathogens within vectors. However, climate is only one of many factors influencing vector distribution, such as habitat destruction, land use, pesticide application, and host density.



Malaria

Malaria is caused by a single cell parasitic Plasmodium is one of the dangerous diseases globally. Due to the tropical climate of Zambia, an attractive habitat is set for mosquitoes. The disease is transmitted via a bite from the female Anopheles mosquito which introduces the protists through its saliva into the circulatory system and eventually to the liver.

Here, they multiply, mature and reproduce thus attacking the red blood cells resulting in chills, sweating, headaches, back pain, fatigue, nausea, spleen enlargement accompanied by anaemia.

The interruption of blood to the brain and damage to vital organs eventually causes death. Several medications such as quinine, chloroquine and other antimalarial drugs are available to prevent the disease as there is currently no vaccine.

Plague

Transmitted by fleas is normally associated with rats including air borne transmission from person to person. Victims suffer from fevers, headaches, painfully swollen lymph nodes and the disease may progress rapidly and may lead to death without antibiotic treatments.



The most popular water contact disease is known as schistosomiasis; caused by the parasitic trematode flatworm Schistosoma. Fresh water snails act as an intermediate host and release larval form of parasites that penetrates the skin of people exposed to contaminated water. The general symptoms include blood in urine (depending on the type of infection), rash or itchy skin, fever, chills, coughs and muscle aches.

Cholera

It is vital to be knowledgeable on Cholera which is usually spread by a bacterium and mostly transmitted through drinking water contaminated by the bacterium.

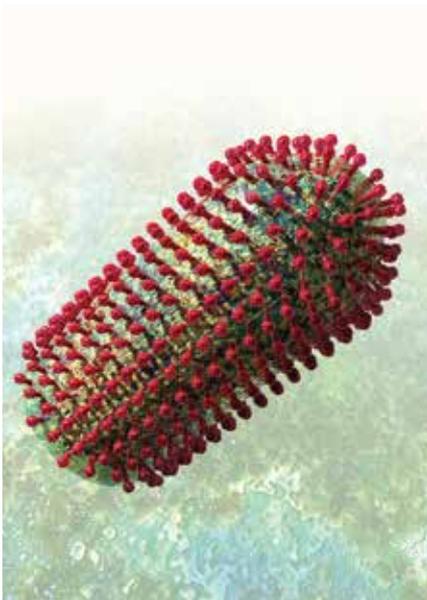
In severe forms, it is known to be one of the most fatal illnesses known with symptoms including very watery diarrhoea, nausea, cramps, nosebleeds, vomiting, rapid pulse and hypovolemic shock (in very severe cases) at which point death occurs in 12-18 hours.



Rabies

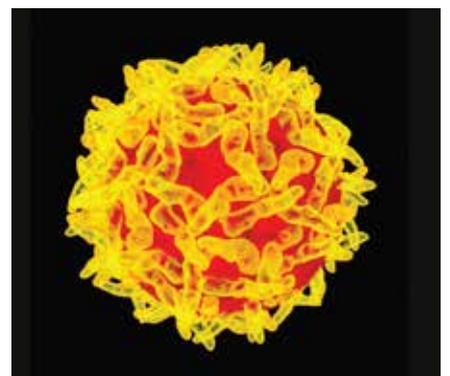
Known to be the most common animal contact disease. It is a viral disease usually transmitted through the bite of an infected animal; most commonly dogs. Symptoms initially are non-specific fever and headaches progressing to neurological symptoms.

The virus affects the central nervous system causing brain alteration and death within a few days of the onset of symptoms. It is therefore advisable to avoid coming into contact with strange dogs or ensure that pets that have received the rabies vaccine have the vaccine certificate.



Yellow Fever

With a high demand of the vaccination certificate required in international travel, Yellow Fever has grown to be an endemic in Africa and South America. It is a mosquito borne viral disease whose severity ranges from influenza like symptoms to severe hepatitis and hemorrhagic fever.



HIV/AIDS

Zambia is experiencing a generalized HIV/AIDS epidemic, with a national HIV prevalence rate of 17% among adult ages 15 to 19. It is mostly spread through heterosexual intercourse, mother to child transmission and the use of unsterilized needles and instruments in medical care facilities. Since the disease is not casually transmitted, this situation should pose minimal risk to persons posted in Zambia providing they engage in safe sexual practices. While the national prevalence rate has increased over the past years, the country has been noted for the significant increase in antiretroviral medications. Confidential HIV antibody testing and counselling are available through the country.



In relation to the high increase of HIV/AIDS in Zambia, the rate of Tuberculosis (and air borne disease) cases has also exhibited a steady increase over the past 10 years. One in three people globally is infected with Tuberculosis and stands at a higher risk when one is infected with HIV. Symptoms include a bad cough that lasts three or more weeks, pain in the chest, no appetite, coughing up blood or phlegm from deep inside the lungs, sweating at night and chills or fever. Treatment for Tuberculosis involves the use of TB medicines with the correct dosage advised by the doctor or nurse which you will need to stay on for at least six months.

Sanitation & Risk Mitigation

Health care is a very sensitive issue in Zambia, therefore, it is important for individuals to avoid situations where they could put themselves at risk of contracting diseases, getting into accidents and obtaining injuries such as:



- Washing fruits and vegetables thoroughly before eating and serving;
- Washing your hands with soap after using the toilet;
- Not eating or buying food from street vendors;
- Eating fully cooked food;
- Avoiding dairy products that aren't pasteurized;
- Chlorinating, boiling, buying or filtering water;
- The use of sanitary toilet facilities;
- Not drinking before or after driving;
- Sleeping with a mosquito net;
- Using insect repellent and spraying rooms contaminated with bugs;
- Wearing clothes that cover most of the body and hats outdoors.
- Wearing a seat belt while inside a care;
- Avoiding driving at night;
- Practicing safe sex.

WHY CHOOSE SES

SES is the benchmark of emergency medical service providers in Zambia. Our aim is to provide access to the highest quality medical care for all our clients and members. *With over 21 years of working experience within Zambia*, SES is embedded in the local community and committed to sustainable long term business practices.

- ✓ SES is registered with the top clinical facilities of clinics and hospitals throughout Zambia
- ✓ Only internationally accredited evacuation company in Zambia
- ✓ Part of an International Group
- ✓ Over 20 years experience in Zambia
- ✓ Internationally trained doctors, nurses and paramedics
- ✓ 24 / 7 emergency contact number with national reach



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