Japanese encephalitis is a viral disease which can affect the brain. Symptoms can include a severe flu-like illness with headache, neck stiffness, confusion and coma. Of those who do develop symptoms of the disease (approximately 1 in 200 infections become clinically apparent) approximately one third will recover, one third will sustain permanent neurological damage, and one third will die. Fortunately this disease is rare in travellers.

**How do you catch Japanese encephalitis?**
The disease is spread by night biting mosquitoes; it is reported in parts of Asia and rarely the Torres Straight islands between Australia and Papua New Guinea. Risk is mainly confined to rural areas where pig farming and rice paddy fields co-exist. The disease is usually seasonal, during and just after the monsoon, but can exist throughout the year in some areas e.g. Malaysia, Indonesia and Southern India.

**Incubation period**
5 -15 days.

**Diagnosis**
Diagnosis can be confirmed by special blood tests.

**Prevention**
Travellers to regions where Japanese encephalitis is present are advised to take steps to avoid mosquito bites. Effective vaccines are available and should be considered by travellers whose itineraries include rural areas especially around rice fields. Long stay travellers should also consider vaccination. High risk activities include camping, cycling and field work.

**Treatment**
There is no specific treatment.

*This information is produced by MASTA as a general guide to be used in conjunction with advice from your doctor or nurse. To obtain a health brief tailored to your journey visit a MASTA associated travel clinic or www.masta-travel-health.com*