International Adoption Clinic

Adopting a child from outside the United States is a complicated procedure. Families are bound by state and federal laws, as well as by adoption laws in the child’s country of origin. Among the many hurdles a family must clear is a series of medical tests. The UK International Adoption Clinic is one of only two clinics in Kentucky that specializes in the health issues associated with international adoption.

Different challenges
Pediatric care in Ethiopia isn’t the same as pediatric care in China, and neither is the same as pediatric care in the United States. Many diseases and conditions that are rare in this country are common, or even endemic, to the countries from which U.S. families most commonly adopt. Infectious diseases are common with international adoptions and have been found in up to 60 percent of new adoptions.

Parasites
Parasites are found in up to 35 percent of international adoptions, making them the most common infectious condition. Sequential testing is required to ensure that a child is free of parasites.

Lead poisoning
Leaded gasoline exhaust, ceramics and even some medicines, contain dangerous levels of lead. Lead exposure and potential toxicity varies among countries but has been especially problematic among children adopted from China, Cambodia, Russia and Eastern Europe.

G6PD deficiency
Some medications and foods can lead to hemolytic anemia in patients with deficiencies of this enzyme, a condition most common in Asia, Mediterranean countries and Africa.

Hepatitis B
Hepatitis is endemic to many countries that place high numbers of children in the United States; a child’s risk depends on the prevalence of hepatitis in his or her country. Depending on the country of origin, hepatitis A and C testing also might be advisable.

Tuberculosis
Latent tuberculosis is found in about 20 percent of international adoptions. An international adoption specialist will be familiar with the testing and immunization methods used in different countries and can therefore evaluate what further testing, if any, is advisable.

Children adopted from abroad should also be screened for syphilis, HIV, fetal alcohol syndrome, and skin infections such as impetigo, scabies, tinea and lice, among other things. Developmental evaluations are also important.

What our clinic provides

Pre-adoption consultation
Upon referral from an adoption agency, the International Adoption Clinic will review all of the available information before a child comes to the United States and before adoption is complete. Based on expert knowledge of the health risks and other complications in the country of origin, as well as any initial medical records, photos and/or videos that are available, the clinic gives prospective parents an idea of what to look for and what to expect once the adoption is complete.

Post-adoption care
An initial examination is recommended about two weeks after the child is in the United States. At this time, we will conduct a thorough physical and assess the child’s growth and development. We will also run lab tests and evaluate
immunization needs. In the event of a serious medical need, the clinic can offer quick referral to other specialists within Kentucky Children's Hospital and UK HealthCare.

**Consistent specialization**

Children from abroad shouldn’t be evaluated or cared for as if they had spent their whole lives under the standards of pediatric care in this country. The differences among the world’s health care systems are vast and can also be nuanced. Medical records must be interpreted in the context of the country from which they came. An international adoption specialist understands these differences and tailors each child’s care to his or her specific needs.

For more information or to arrange a pre-adoption evaluation, email Shawn Taylor, MD, at **shawn.taylor@uky.edu**.

To schedule a post-adoption appointment, contact the International Adoption Clinic at **859-257-4297**.