

Yellow Fever

What is Yellow Fever?

This is a serious infection transmitted by the bite of an infected mosquito. The severity of the illness can vary from a flu-like illness to severe illness and death. The countries affected can be accessed at www.nathnac.org

Where does Yellow Fever occur?

Yellow fever occurs in tropical parts of South America and Africa. Your travel health advisor will tell you if it is a risk where you are travelling. Although most cases occur in the countryside, it can also occur in cities, particularly in parts of West Africa. The World Health Organization estimates that 200,000 cases occur each year.

How do you prevent Yellow Fever infection?

Mosquitoes that transmit yellow fever prefer to bite during the daytime, particularly in the early morning and before dusk.

- Cover-up as much as possible with loose-fitting, lightweight clothing.
- Apply insect repellents, ideally containing DEET, to exposed areas of skin.
- For extra protection consider using a clothing treatment which contains an insecticide called permethrin.
- Vaccination should be considered by all those visiting a country known to have yellow fever

Yellow Fever vaccine

Ideally, the vaccine is given at least 10 days prior to the trip, although vaccination at shorter notice maybe considered. A booster is usually given after 10 years. A certificate will be issued at the time of vaccination.

Vaccine safety

Millions of doses of this vaccine have been used worldwide for over 60 years. The vaccine is considered to have a good safety record being well tolerated by most people.

- Mild reactions occur in 10-30% of those vaccinated. They include mild headaches, soreness at the site of injection and generalized aches and pains.

- Extremely rare reactions have been reported and include:
 - Severe allergic type reactions in 0.8 -1.8 per 100,000 people vaccinated
 - Severe nervous system reactions (brain inflammation and meningitis) or reactions involving all organs may occur in less than 1 per 100,000 people vaccinated.

These reactions have only been reported in those receiving the vaccine for the first time. Those aged 60 or over appear to have an increased risk of these particular side effects of 2.5 per 100,000.

Who should NOT receive vaccine?

- Those with a severe allergy to eggs or rare hereditary fructose intolerance
- Children under 9 months. Occasionally children 6-8 months of age may be vaccinated if there is high risk of acquiring disease.
- People whose immune system is compromised
- Those receiving or recently received in the last 6 months treatments for cancer
- Those on drugs that suppress the immune system e.g. steroids
- People whose immune system is compromised because of HIV infection. Sometimes, people who are HIV positive and are fit and well, may be given the vaccine.
- Women who are pregnant or breast feeding are not usually vaccinated
- Those with a thymus gland problem e.g. myasthenia gravis, thymoma or thymectomy

Certificate requirements:

You should not consider travelling to a yellow fever affected country without vaccination. Should the trip be unavoidable and you are unable to have the vaccine then a medical exemption letter will be considered.

For some countries vaccination is mandatory. For others it is not a legal entry requirement, but it is recommended for your own personal protection.