

What is Yellow Fever?

Yellow fever is a serious infection transmitted from 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:

<https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>

Yellow fever (YF) occurs in tropical parts of South and Central America, Africa & Trinidad. Your travel health advisor will tell you if there is a risk where you are travelling.

Although most cases occur in the countryside, it can also occur in cities. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 200,000 cases occur each year with 30,000 deaths.

How do you prevent Yellow Fever infection?

Mosquitoes that transmit YF 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 50% 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 yellow fever risk area.

Yellow Fever vaccine

The vaccine should be given 10 days prior to travel to allow immunity to develop.

Millions of doses of this vaccine have been used worldwide for over 70 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, redness, soreness and swelling at the site of injection, generalized aches and pains, tiredness and a low-grade fever.
- Extremely rare reactions have been reported and include:
 - Severe allergic type reactions in 1.3 per 100,000 people vaccinated

Severe nervous system reactions (brain inflammation and meningitis) or reactions involving all organs may occur in less than 0.3-0.8 per 100,000 people vaccinated. This reaction has symptoms similar to YF disease.

These reactions have only been reported in those receiving the vaccine for the first time.

People aged 60 years or over have a potentially higher risk of these rare but serious side effects estimated at 1.2 to 2.2 per 100,000 people vaccinated.

Who should NOT receive vaccine?

- Those with a severe allergy to eggs/chicken protein or rare hereditary fructose intolerance
- Anyone with a confirmed severe allergy to a previous dose of YF (or any other ingredients of the vaccine).
- Those who have a first -degree family member who has had a serious adverse reaction to yellow fever vaccine
- Children under 9 months. Occasionally children 6-8 months of age may be vaccinated if there is high risk of disease
- Those who have received MMR on the same day the yellow fever vaccine is due to be given or in the past 4 weeks
- Any illness/condition that might affect your immune system
- Those receiving or recently received in past 6 – 12 months treatments for cancer
- Those on drugs that suppress the immune system or who have taken them in the last 12 months need to discuss with the travel advisor whether they can receive the YF vaccine.
- 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 any history of a thymus gland problem (e.g. myasthenia gravis, thymoma or thymectomy due to a thymus disorder)
- People who have had an operation to remove their thymus gland (thymectomy) for any reason including incidental thymectomy during cardiac surgery or open chest surgery.
- Those aged 60 years or older, who are travelling to areas where yellow fever vaccine is 'generally not' recommended by WHO

Certificate requirements

You should not consider travelling to a YF affected area without vaccination.

The International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis (ICVP) becomes valid 10 days after vaccination. The certificate is valid for the life of the person vaccinated.

As of July 2016, a valid ICVP cannot be rejected on the grounds that more than ten years have passed since the date vaccination became effective as stated on the certificate; and that boosters or revaccination cannot be required by countries (WHO 2016).

<https://www.who.int/ith/updates/20160727/en/>

If you are unable to have the vaccine, then a medical exemption letter may be provided by the doctor or nurse.

The travel clinic nurse or doctor will advise you of your certificate requirements for your specific travel plans.

Further information can be found at:

<https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/1683/pil>

<https://nathnacyfzone.org.uk/factsheet/63/yellow-fever-information-for-travellers-leaflet>

Your qualified travel health advisor will carry out a risk assessment with you to consider whether there is a significant and unavoidable risk of acquiring yellow fever infection, (and therefore the risk of catching the disease is greater than the risk of having the vaccine).