

## Yellow Fever Areas

### What are the risks from yellow fever vaccine?

YF vaccine is well tolerated by most people. If there are reactions they are usually mild and can consist of:

- Soreness at the injection site
- Headaches and muscle aches
- Low-grade fever

These reactions will occur in up to 30% of people, begin shortly after the vaccine is given and can last for several days.

There are also very rare reactions following vaccine. These consist of three types:

- Severe allergic reactions usually occurring in people who are allergic to eggs. This happens about once in every 50,000 to 125,000 people who receive the vaccine.
- Severe nervous system reactions such as meningitis or brain inflammation. This happens about once in every 250,000 people who receive the vaccine.
- Severe reaction involving several body organs such as liver, lung, and kidneys. This happens about once in every 250,000 people who receive the vaccine. This reaction has symptoms similar to YF disease.

The nervous system and multiple organ reactions have occurred only in people who have received YF vaccine for the first time. There is a higher risk for these two reactions in those who are aged 60 years and older. In people 60 and over the reactions happen about once in every 50,000 people who receive the vaccine.

### What should I do about any potential risks from the vaccine?

Before you receive the vaccine you should thoroughly discuss the indications for the vaccine and be honest about your medical history. Your GP or nurse can then advise whether it is appropriate for you to have the vaccine.

After you get the vaccine you should monitor your health over the next month and report any problems to the YFVC or your GP.



Maps courtesy of the World Health Organization

### Where can I get more information about yellow fever and yellow fever vaccine?

- NaTHNaC, Yellow fever information sheet: <http://www.nathnac.org/travel/factsheets/YF.htm>
- World Health Organization, Yellow fever fact sheet: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs100/en/>

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# Yellow Fever Vaccine

## INFORMATION FOR TRAVELLERS

### What is yellow fever?

Yellow fever (YF) is a serious illness caused by the YF virus. It is one of the viral haemorrhagic fevers. YF is passed on to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. It is not contagious; one person cannot catch YF directly from another person.

YF can vary from a flu-like illness that gets better on its own over several days to a severe illness with organ failure and death.

### Symptoms of YF may include:

- Fever, muscle aches and pains, and headache
- Nausea and vomiting
- Jaundice (turning yellow)
- Liver, kidney and lung failure
- Bleeding

There is no specific medicine to treat YF. Most people with the disease will need to be admitted to hospital and treated for their symptoms, some in intensive care. Many people who get YF will die from the disease.

## Where does yellow fever occur?

YF occurs in tropical parts of South America and Africa (see maps on last page). Although most cases occur in the countryside, it can also occur in cities, particularly in parts of West Africa. The World Health Organization reports about 1,500 cases each year in South America and Africa, although it is likely that many more occur, but do not get reported.

## How can I prevent yellow fever?

There are two ways to prevent YF:

- Prevent mosquito bites.
- Get the YF vaccine at least 10 days before you travel.

Travellers to YF areas should do both things.

### Mosquito bites:

Mosquitoes that transmit YF tend to bite during the daytime, particularly in the hours after dawn and before dusk. Ways of preventing bites are:

- Cover-up as much as possible with loose-fitting, lightweight clothing.
- Apply insect repellents, ideally containing 30-50% DEET, to exposed areas of skin.
- Apply an insecticide such as permethrin to clothing, which will kill mosquitoes on contact. Permethrin should not be used directly on the skin.

More detailed information about avoiding bites can be found on the NaTHNaC website:

[http://www.nathnac.org/travel/misc/travellers\\_mos.htm](http://www.nathnac.org/travel/misc/travellers_mos.htm)



### Yellow fever vaccine:

The vaccine against YF has been used for more than 60 years. It works very well and lasts for a long period of time. Most people do not have any problems with the vaccine. Vaccination can only be given in approved YF vaccination centres (YFVCs). Your local GP may be a YFVC, but if not, you can find a YFVC in the UK by searching on the NaTHNaC website:

<http://www.nathnac.org/yellowfevercentres.aspx?comingfrom=travel>

YF vaccine must be given 10 days or more before your trip to be effective and to be officially accepted by the country to which you are travelling. Travellers who are leaving sooner than the 10 day interval should discuss with their YFVC whether to get YF vaccine. You must carry your Certificate of Vaccination with you during travel. It is an official record of your vaccination and may be requested by immigration officials.

The YFVC where you received vaccine will give you this certificate. For international travel, the YF certificate lasts for 10 years.

### Who should get yellow fever vaccine?

In general, there are two situations where travellers should be vaccinated against YF:

- Travel to countries that require vaccination as a condition for entry.
- Travel to countries where there is a risk of getting YF.

Your YFVC will be able to advise you whether or not you need YF vaccine. You should still get advice from a YFVC even if you have received information about YF vaccine from your travel agent. Some travel agents may not be up-to-date with current YF recommendations.

### Who should not get yellow fever vaccine?

- Anyone with a severe allergy to eggs, or to a previous dose of YF vaccine.
- Children younger than 9 months old. Rarely, children 6 to 8 months old may be vaccinated.
- People whose immune system is affected because of a disease or treatment for a disease. Examples of this are: current or recent treatment (within 6 months) with chemotherapy or radiation for cancer, taking high doses of steroids or other drugs that affect the immune system, or having a recent organ or bone marrow transplant.
- People whose immune system is suppressed because of HIV infection. However, sometimes people who are HIV positive, but are fit and well, are receiving highly active anti-retroviral therapy, and have a high CD4 count may be given the vaccine.
- People with a disorder of their thymus gland such as myasthenia gravis and thymoma, with a history of thymus removal.
- Women who are pregnant. After careful consideration, pregnant women may be vaccinated if they are travelling to a destination at high risk for YF. They must carefully consider if a trip to a YF country is wise, as there are diseases in addition to YF, such as malaria, that can threaten their health.

You should discuss with your YFVC any concerns about your health and if you should get the vaccine.

### What if I cannot get a yellow fever vaccine?

Travellers who cannot have the vaccine should consider if they need to travel to a YF risk destination. Travellers whose trip is unavoidable may be issued with a Letter of Medical Exemption that will be taken into consideration by immigration authorities. This is usually sufficient to allow entry into the country. As the risk of YF remains, travellers should take care to avoid mosquito bites.