

Yellow fever factsheet

Yellow fever is transmitted to people by mosquitoes. Symptoms include fever, headache, muscle pain, nausea and vomiting. Vaccination is required for people travelling to areas where the virus is common, such as parts of tropical South America and sub-saharan Africa.

What is yellow fever?

Yellow fever is caused by a virus that is mainly spread by *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes (known as the Dengue mosquito). It is related to the West Nile and Japanese encephalitis viruses.

What are the symptoms of yellow fever?

Symptoms of yellow fever include:

- sudden onset of fever
- chills
- muscle pain
- backache
- headache
- nausea and vomiting.

Symptoms usually develop 3-6 days after the virus enters the body. Most patients with symptoms recover after 3-4 days. A small proportion of patients with yellow fever develop severe symptoms and approximately half of those die within 10-14 days.

If you have the below severe symptoms, speak to your doctor immediately or in an emergency, call 000:

- bleeding from the mouth, nose and/or gut
- jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes)
- abdominal pain with vomiting
- problems with kidney function.

How is yellow fever spread?

People develop yellow fever after being bitten by a mosquito that is infected with the yellow fever virus. Yellow fever is mainly spread by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito. The mosquito becomes infected when it feeds on a person or animal who has yellow fever virus in their blood during their infection. The virus multiplies inside the mosquito and the mosquito will infect other people with future bites. *Aedes aegypti* do not occur in NSW however are found in tropical climates, such as north, central and southern Queensland.

Who is at risk of yellow fever?

People who travel to yellow fever endemic countries such as in sub-Saharan Africa and tropical South America and who are not vaccinated, are at risk of getting yellow fever.

See the [World Health Organisation \(WHO\) website](#) for a list of yellow fever- affected countries.

How is yellow fever prevented?

Yellow fever can be prevented by vaccination and avoiding mosquito bites.

Yellow fever vaccination

A single yellow fever vaccination provides life-long protection. Vaccination is recommended for people who work with yellow fever virus in laboratories or are aged over 9 months and are travelling to an area with a risk of yellow fever.

Yellow fever vaccination must be administered at an approved yellow fever vaccination centre and this must be recorded on an international yellow fever vaccination certificate. See [NSW Health yellow fever immunisation](#) for further information and a list of approved yellow fever vaccination centres.

Vaccination requirements to enter Australia

All travellers are recommended to be vaccinated for yellow fever if travelling to or from a yellow fever risk country. People entering Australia who are one year of age or older will be asked to provide an international vaccination certificate if, within six days before arriving in Australia, they have stayed overnight or longer in a yellow fever risk country. If you are unable to provide a certificate you will still be able to enter Australia.

Unvaccinated people entering Australia will still be permitted to enter Australia however a Biosecurity Officer from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources will reinforce the seriousness of the disease and provide a Yellow Fever Action Card. The card provides instructions on what to do if you develop symptoms of yellow fever in the six-day period following departure from a yellow fever risk country.

Further information is available from the [Department of Health and Aged Care Yellow fever factsheet](#).

Vaccination to enter other countries

Other countries may have different yellow fever vaccination entry requirements. Make sure to check the requirements prior to travel. Countries may refuse your entry without a valid yellow fever vaccination certificate if you have recently been in a yellow fever infected country. Some of these may only allow unvaccinated people to enter after they are vaccinated at their border. The safety of the vaccine given in such situations cannot be guaranteed.

Change in yellow fever vaccination requirements since June 2016

The Australian Government has adopted the World Health Organization amendment to the International Health Regulations (2005) which extends the period of vaccine protection and term of validity from 10 years to life-long duration. This means that international yellow fever vaccination certificates presented at Australian borders will be accepted even if the vaccination was given more than 10 years previously.

For more detailed Yellow Fever vaccination advice, see the [Australian Immunisation Handbook](#) and speak to your doctor or travel health clinic.

Preventing mosquito bites

Protect yourself against mosquito bites with these steps:

- Wear light-coloured, long-sleeved shirts, long trousers and enclosed shoes. Mosquitoes can bite through tight clothing.
- Apply mosquito repellent containing picaridin, DEET or oil of lemon eucalyptus, evenly to all areas of exposed skin. Natural or homemade repellents provide limited protection. Read the instructions to find out how often you should reapply repellent. Always apply sunscreen first and then apply repellent.
- Take special care during peak mosquito biting hours.
- Remove stagnant water around the home as they can become mosquito breeding sites.
- Use mosquito nets, and screen windows and doors.

In addition to the general protection measures above, when travelling overseas you should also:

- Stay and sleep in screened or air-conditioned rooms.
- Use a mosquito bed net if the sleeping area is exposed to the outdoors. Effective nets are treated with a pyrethroid insecticide, such as permethrin. Pre-treated bed nets can be purchased before travelling, or nets can be treated after purchase.
- Be aware of and take special care during peak mosquito biting hours. Some species of mosquitoes such as *Aedes aegypti* will bite all throughout the day.
- Avoid known areas of high mosquito-borne disease transmission or outbreaks.

For more detailed information on mosquito bite prevention, see the [Mosquitoes are a Health Hazard factsheet](#). See [Smartraveller](#) for further information on travel.

How is yellow fever diagnosed?

Your doctor can take a blood sample and have it tested for yellow fever. A second blood test may be required to confirm a recent infection.

How is yellow fever treated?

There is no specific treatment for yellow fever. People can be treated in hospital for dehydration and fever. If you have severe symptoms, you may need additional intensive care in the hospital.

What is the public health response?

When laboratories confirm that someone has yellow fever, they notify their local public health unit. Public health units follow up each case to determine where the person acquired the infection. This information is important in identifying areas where the virus is being transmitted and to prevent spread of yellow fever in Australia.

Additional resources

If you have symptoms of yellow fever and you are concerned, speak to your doctor right away, or in an emergency call 000.

To learn more about Australian and international yellow fever vaccination certificate requirements, see the [Australian Department of Health yellow fever fact sheet](#).

For further advice:

- see [Mosquitoes are a health hazard fact sheet](#) and [Staying safe and healthy overseas](#)
- call your local public health unit on 1300 066 055
- call Healthdirect on 1800 022 222 for free 24-hour health advice
- speak to your local pharmacist.