

# YELLOW FEVER

## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

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### WHAT IS YELLOW FEVER?

Yellow fever is a *Flavivirus*. It is in the same family as the Zika, West Nile and dengue viruses. *Flaviviruses* are spread by infected mosquitoes.

### WHAT IS THE RISK OF GETTING YELLOW FEVER?

The risk of contracting yellow fever in the United States is very low. However, traveling to countries with higher rates of infection increases the risk of contracting yellow fever.

### WHERE IS YELLOW FEVER MOST COMMON?

Yellow fever is most commonly found in the tropics of Africa and South and Central America.

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF YELLOW FEVER?

Most people do not have symptoms of yellow fever. However, those who do, typically experience a sudden onset of fever, chills, muscle pain, nausea, vomiting and headache. About 15 of 100 people with symptoms will go on to experience more severe symptoms, including jaundice (yellowing of the skin), bleeding and organ failure. About 1 of every 5 people with severe symptoms, such as kidney and liver failure, die from the infection.

### HOW IS YELLOW FEVER TRANSMITTED?

Yellow fever is transmitted by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes bite people to feed on their blood. During this process, mosquitoes deposit saliva that contains chemicals that improve their ability to feed. If the mosquito is infected with yellow fever virus, the virus is introduced in the saliva.



### IS YELLOW FEVER DANGEROUS?

Each year, it is estimated that about 150,000 people around the world are infected with yellow fever and about 30,000 to 60,000 die.

### HOW IS THE YELLOW FEVER VACCINE MADE?

The yellow fever vaccine is a live, weakened viral vaccine. The vaccine virus was weakened by growing it in cells in the lab. The weakened virus is then produced in eggs.

### IS THE YELLOW FEVER VACCINE SAFE?

The vaccine is safe for most people, who will have no or minimal side effects, such as pain at the site of injection, low fever, headache or body aches. See answer to “Who should not get the yellow fever vaccine?” to determine if you are in a group that should not get the vaccine.

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## WHO SHOULD GET THE YELLOW FEVER VACCINE?

Individuals who live in or are planning to visit areas at risk for yellow fever infection should receive the vaccine. The yellow fever vaccine is not a routinely recommended vaccine in the United States.

Some countries require proof of yellow fever vaccination before entry. If you are planning international travel, check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) travel website, [cdc.gov/travel](https://www.cdc.gov/travel), to see if you will require proof of vaccination during your trip. Only certified yellow fever vaccination providers can administer the vaccine and provide the necessary certification. Travel clinics typically provide this and other important information and services for staying healthy during travel. You can locate a travel clinic near you using the International Society of Travel Medicine clinic locator at [istm.org](https://www.istm.org).

Laboratory workers who handle or may be exposed to yellow fever virus are also recommended to be vaccinated.

Most individuals only require a single dose of yellow fever vaccine unless they fall into one of a small number of categories, including those who were pregnant or were infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) when they got their first dose and those who had a hematopoietic stem cell transplant after receiving their first dose. Laboratory workers who continue to work with the virus can have their antibody levels checked every 10 years to determine if they need additional doses, and people vaccinated more than 10 years earlier who are traveling to a high-risk setting may also be given a booster dose.

## WHO SHOULD NOT GET THE YELLOW FEVER VACCINE?

Individuals who are immune compromised; those with severe egg, chicken protein, or gelatin allergies; and infants younger than 6 months should not receive the vaccine. In addition, those who are pregnant or breastfeeding, 60 years of age and older, and parents of infants between 6 and 8 months of age should discuss the risks and benefits of being vaccinated with their healthcare provider.

## ARE THERE WAYS TO BE PROTECTED OTHER THAN VACCINATION?

Yes. While vaccination provides the best protection, taking precautions against being bitten by infected mosquitoes is also prudent, including reducing the amount of time spent in areas with known yellow fever transmission, wearing protective clothing, and using insect repellants approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

## SHOULD WE GET VACCINATED IF WE'RE NOT PLANNING ON VISITING AN AT-RISK COUNTRY?

Yellow fever vaccine is not routinely recommended in the United States.

This information is provided by the Vaccine Education Center at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. The Center is an educational resource for parents, the public and healthcare professionals and is composed of scientists, physicians, mothers and fathers devoted to the study and prevention of infectious diseases. The Vaccine Education Center is funded by endowed chairs from Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. The Center does not receive support from pharmaceutical companies.  
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