



Yellow fever - general fact sheet

If you are travelling to Africa, the Caribbean, Central or South America, you should be aware of the risk of yellow fever virus transmission and take the necessary precautions to protect yourself from infection.

This fact sheet covers: background; occurrence; vaccination requirement for travel; treatment; avoidance; biosecurity border measures; yellow fever vaccination certificate.

Yellow fever vaccination for travellers

On 16 June 2016, the Australian Government adopted the World Health Organization amendment to the International Health Regulations (2005) regarding the period of protection afforded by yellow fever vaccination, and the term of validity of the certificate. The period of protection and term of validity has changed from 10 years to the duration of the life of the person vaccinated. This is based on data demonstrating for the majority of recipients, a single dose of yellow fever vaccine results in life-long immunity.

International yellow fever vaccination certificates presented at Australia's border will be accepted even if the vaccination was given more than ten years ago. Individuals who cannot provide a yellow fever vaccination certificate at the border will still be required to go through border control processes when entering Australia. As is current practice, entry to Australia will not be refused on the basis of non-compliance with yellow fever monitoring and control requirements.

Vaccination is still strongly recommended for travellers who have never been vaccinated for yellow fever and who intend to travel to countries where there is a risk of transmission. Border biosecurity processes will remain in place for unvaccinated travellers.

What is yellow fever?

Yellow fever is a viral disease that is transmitted by mosquitoes. Yellow fever can lead to serious illness and even death. It is called 'yellow fever' because in serious cases, the skin turns yellow in colour. This is known as 'jaundice'. Yellow fever is a Listed Human Disease under Australia's [Biosecurity \(Listed Human Diseases\) Determination 2016](#).

What are the symptoms of yellow fever?

Symptoms of yellow fever may take 3 to 6 days to appear. Some infections can be mild but most lead to serious illness characterised by two stages. In the first stage fever, muscle pain, nausea, vomiting, headache and weakness



occur. About 15 to 25 per cent of those with yellow fever progress to the second stage also known as the 'toxic' stage, of which half die within 10 to 14 days after onset of illness. Visible bleeding, jaundice, kidney and liver failure can occur during the second stage.

What is the occurrence of yellow fever worldwide?

The World Health Organization (WHO) closely monitors reports of yellow fever infection. Yellow fever is considered to be endemic in 29 African and 13 Central and South American countries.

Does yellow fever occur in Australia?

Yellow fever does not occur in Australia, however one of the mosquito species (*Aedes aegypti*) that can transmit the disease is widely distributed in northern Queensland.

How do humans become infected with yellow fever virus?

Yellow fever is transmitted to humans by the bite of infected mosquitoes, principally, *Aedes* and *Haemagogus* mosquito species. The disease occurs in two forms – urban and sylvatic (jungle) yellow fever. Both forms are caused by the same virus.

In tropical rainforests, monkeys act as reservoirs for the virus. The yellow fever virus is passed to mosquitoes that feed on infected monkeys. These mosquitoes bite humans that enter the forest, resulting in some cases of yellow fever. This form of the disease is known as 'sylvatic' or 'jungle' yellow fever.

In some parts of Africa mosquitoes that breed around households, can infect humans. Urban yellow fever happens when infected people introduce the virus into areas with high human populations. Mosquitoes carry the virus from person to person.

How is yellow fever treated?

There is no specific treatment for yellow fever, however medicines can be used to relieve the symptoms and may improve the outcome for seriously ill patients.

Australia's list of yellow fever risk countries and areas

Australia's list of yellow fever risk countries and areas is guided by the WHO list of yellow fever endemic countries and also takes into account recent international surveillance data.