



## Yellow fever vaccine

Travel vaccines are recommended if you travel to or work in some countries. Discuss your travel plans with a public health unit, a travel clinic, or your health care provider at least 6 to 8 weeks before you travel.

Most travel vaccines are not covered by the provincial medical services plan (MSP), so check with your local travel clinic to find out the cost.

Bring a record of all vaccines you have received in the past to the travel clinic. Keep a record of the travel vaccines you receive and take this with you on your trip.

### What is yellow fever vaccine?

Yellow fever vaccine helps protect against the yellow fever virus. Yellow fever is a viral disease spread by infected mosquitoes. The vaccine is approved by Health Canada.

### Who should get the vaccine?

If you are travelling to or working in tropical areas of Africa or Central and South America, you may need to get the vaccine. Talk to your health care provider or travel clinic for more information.

For a list of yellow fever vaccination centres in B.C., visit the Public Health Agency of Canada: [www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/travel-health/yellow-fever/vaccination-centres-canada-british-columbia.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/travel-health/yellow-fever/vaccination-centres-canada-british-columbia.html).

The vaccine is also recommended for workers routinely exposed to the yellow fever virus, such as certain researchers and lab employees.

Adults and children 9 months of age and older can receive the vaccine, which is given as 1 dose or shot.

The vaccine provides effective immunity within 30 days for 99 per cent of those vaccinated. Travel to affected areas should not begin before this time. One vaccination of yellow fever vaccine is enough to

build life-long immunity against yellow fever. A booster dose of the vaccine is not needed.

After you get the vaccine, you will receive a stamped document called the International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis. This document is an official record and a legal requirement for entry into some countries. If you cannot receive the yellow fever vaccine due to a medical reason, you will need written documentation on official letterhead from your health care provider or a Certificate of Medical Contraindication to Vaccination from a travel clinic. The letter or certificate should state the medical reason why the vaccine could not be given.

Without the certificate or your health care provider's letter, you may be refused entry to the country you are visiting, or you may be given the vaccine at the country's port of entry. In some countries, immunization practices may not be ideal.

### What are the benefits of the vaccine?

The yellow fever vaccine is the best way to protect against the yellow fever virus, a serious and sometimes fatal infection.

### What are the possible reactions after the vaccine?

Vaccines are very safe. It is much safer to get the vaccine than to get yellow fever. Common reactions to the vaccine may include soreness, redness or swelling where the shot was given. A mild headache, slight fever, or aching muscles lasting 1 or 2 days can occur 5 to 10 days after getting the vaccine.

Acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) or ibuprofen\* (e.g. Advil®) can be given for fever or soreness. ASA (e.g. Aspirin®) should not be given to anyone under 18 years of age due to the risk of Reye Syndrome.

\*Ibuprofen should not be given to children under 6 months of age without first speaking to your health care provider.

For more information on Reye Syndrome, see [HealthLinkBC File #84 Reye syndrome](#).

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine because there is an extremely rare possibility, less than 1 in a million, of a life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. This may include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. Should this reaction occur, your health care provider is prepared to treat it. Emergency treatment includes administration of epinephrine (adrenaline) and transfer by ambulance to the nearest emergency department. If symptoms develop after you leave the clinic, call **9-1-1** or the local emergency number.

It is important to always report serious or unexpected reactions to your health care provider.

### **Who should not get the vaccine?**

The following people should generally not get the vaccine, however if travel cannot be avoided, discuss the benefits versus the risks of the yellow fever vaccine with your health care provider.

- Children less than 9 months of age
- People 60 years of age and older
- People with a history of thymus disease or disorder, including myasthenia gravis, thymoma, thymectomy, or DiGeorge syndrome. You could have an increased risk of multiple organ system failure after getting the vaccine. The size of the risk is not currently known

Speak with a travel clinic or health care provider if you have or had any of the following reactions or conditions:

- A life-threatening reaction to a previous dose of yellow fever vaccine, or any component of the vaccine including gelatin, or to latex
- A serious allergy to eggs

- An immune system weakened by disease or medical treatment
- Relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis (MS). The yellow fever vaccine may increase risk of MS relapse if you have relapsing-remitting MS
- Severe immunodeficiency due to symptomatic HIV/AIDS or other causes
- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding. Exceptions may be made during an outbreak when the risk of infection is high

### **What is yellow fever?**

Yellow fever is a serious and life-threatening infection caused by a virus. It gets its name from the yellowing of the skin and the eyes (jaundice) that occurs when the virus attacks the liver.

For every 10 people who get sick, up to 4 will die.

Symptoms include sudden onset of fever, chills, headache, backache, all-over muscle pain, nausea, and vomiting. In serious cases, you may bleed from your nose, mouth, and intestine. You may also have liver and kidney failure. Currently, there is no drug treatment for the disease.

Yellow fever virus is spread to people by the bite of infected mosquitoes that live in the tropical areas of Africa, and Central and South America. The virus cannot be spread by mosquitoes in Canada. The species of mosquito that transmits the virus can transmit it between rainforest monkeys and person to person. For information on preventing mosquito bites, see

[HealthLinkBC File #41f Malaria prevention](#).

### **Mature minor consent**

It is recommended that parents or guardians and their children discuss consent for immunization. Children under the age of 19, who are able to understand the benefits and possible reactions for each vaccine and the risk of not getting immunized, can legally consent to or refuse immunizations. For more information on mature minor consent see [HealthLinkBC File #119 The Infants Act, mature minor consent and immunization](#).