



Yellow fever

10 May 2023

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, and the 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.

Africa

- Angola
- Benin
- Burkina Faso
- Burundi
- Cameroon
- Central African Republic
- Chad
- Congo, Democratic Republic of the

- Congo, Republic of the
- Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast)
- Equatorial Guinea
- Ethiopia
- Gabon
- Gambia
- Ghana
- Guinea
- Guinea-Bissau
- Kenya
- Liberia
- Mali
- Mauritania
- Niger
- Nigeria
- Senegal
- Sierra Leone
- South Sudan
- Sudan
- Togo
- Uganda

South America & Central America

- Argentina – Misiones and Corrientes Provinces
- Bolivia
- Brazil
- Colombia
- Ecuador including Galapagos Islands
- French Guiana
- Guyana
- Panama
- Paraguay
- Peru
- Suriname
- Trinidad and Tobago
- Venezuela

How can travellers protect against yellow fever?

By getting vaccinated

Yellow fever is preventable. The vaccine is safe and almost 100 percent effective. With few exceptions, vaccination is recommended for all travellers to countries or areas where there is a risk of yellow fever transmission.

By avoiding mosquitoes

The mosquitoes that transmit yellow fever are usually active during the day. All people who travel to or live in yellow fever endemic countries are advised to avoid mosquitoes. This can be done by taking the following measures:

- Wear a mosquito repellent containing DEET or picaridin
- Wear light coloured, long-sleeved clothes when you're outdoors
- Avoid wearing perfume or cologne (some of these can attract mosquitoes)
- Prevent mosquitoes entering your accommodation
- Use a mosquito net at night-time (if mosquitoes are likely to be present)

Yellow fever vaccination

Do I need a yellow fever vaccination?

It is strongly recommended that all travellers be vaccinated for yellow fever if travelling to or from a yellow fever risk country. Refer to: [Where can I get a yellow fever vaccination and vaccination certificate.](#)

People 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. People unable to provide a certificate will still be able to enter Australia.

Who can have a yellow fever vaccination?

The yellow fever vaccine is recommended for:

- persons who are nine months of age or older travelling or living in any country in West Africa, regardless of where they will be in that country; and
- persons who are nine months of age or older travelling or living outside the urban areas of all other yellow fever endemic countries.

Additional information on yellow fever vaccination can be found in [The Australian Immunisation Handbook](#).

Can I be exempt from yellow fever vaccination?

Travellers should seek medical advice on yellow fever vaccination for their individual medical circumstances, particularly about the suitability of yellow

fever vaccine for infants, pregnant or breastfeeding women and those who are immunocompromised.

If your health care practitioner is of the opinion that vaccination is contraindicated on medical grounds, they should supply you with a dated and signed letter detailing the reasons why you should not be vaccinated. You should contact the embassy of the country(ies) to which you are travelling to determine whether the letter needs to be in another language in addition to English in order to meet the entry requirements of the country(ies).

Additional information on contraindications and precautions related to yellow fever vaccination can be found in [The Australian Immunisation Handbook](#).

Will I be allowed to enter Australia, if I do not have a yellow fever vaccination certificate?

If you are arriving in Australia from a yellow fever risk country but do not hold a vaccination certificate, you will still be permitted to enter Australia. On arrival in Australia, a Biosecurity Officer from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources will reinforce the seriousness of the disease to you and provide you with a Yellow Fever Action Card. The card provides instructions on what you should do if you develop any symptoms of yellow fever in the six-day period following your departure from a yellow fever risk country.

As part of your travel arrangements it is strongly recommended that you check the yellow fever entry requirements for **all** the countries you intend entering, including those in which you will transit by contacting their foreign missions in Australia. The entry requirements for yellow fever vaccination differ markedly from country to country depending upon their relative risk exposure to the disease. The [Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade \(DFAT\)](#) web site lists contact details for diplomatic representatives of various foreign governments. [DFAT's Smartraveller](#) web site also provides detailed travel information for each country.

If you have travelled through a yellow fever risk country, and you do not have a valid yellow fever vaccination certificate, you risk being refused entry into many countries or may be required to be vaccinated upon arrival.

Where can I get a yellow fever vaccination and vaccination certificate?

Yellow fever vaccinations must be provided by an approved yellow fever vaccination clinic. These clinics will provide a vaccination certificate in the form approved and required by WHO. A single dose of yellow fever vaccine will provide life-long protection against the disease for most people. Travellers should ensure they are vaccinated no less than 10 days before entering the yellow fever risk area, due to protection beginning 10 days after vaccination.

For details of your nearest yellow fever vaccination clinic, please contact your state or territory health department. Contact details for state or territory health departments can be found below.

Australian Capital Territory

- [Immunisation Section](#)
- ACT Department of Health
- Phone: (02) 5124 9800
- [ACT Yellow Fever Vaccination Centres](#)

New South Wales

- [Public Health Units](#)
- NSW Department of Health
- Phone: 1300 066 055
- [NSW Yellow Fever Vaccination Centres](#)

Northern Territory

- [Centre for Disease Control](#)
- Department of Health and Families
- Phone: (08) 8922 8044
- [NT Yellow Fever Vaccination Centres](#)

Queensland

- [Communicable Diseases Unit](#)
- Queensland Health
- Phone: (07) 3328 9724
- [QLD Yellow Fever Vaccination Centres](#)

South Australia

- [Communicable Disease Control Branch](#)
- Department of Health
- Phone: 1300 232 272
- [SA Yellow Fever Vaccination Centres](#)

Tasmania

- [Communicable Disease Prevention Unit](#)
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Phone: 1800 671 738
- [TAS Yellow Fever Vaccination Centres](#)

Victoria

- [Immunisation Section](#)
- Department of Health
- Phone: 1300 882 008
- [VIC Yellow Fever Vaccination Centres](#)

Western Australia

- [Communicable Disease Control Directorate](#)
- Department of Health Western Australia
- Phone: (08) 9222 8588 (office hours) or (08) 9328 0553 (after hours)
- [WA Yellow Fever Vaccination Centres](#)

Where do I go for further information?

If you require any information about travel vaccinations, please contact your general practitioner or travel doctor.

Please contact the Department of Health on (02) 6289 8638 during business hours (AEST) for information about Australian requirements for yellow fever vaccination.

Useful resources

- [International travel and health handbook](#)
- [WHO yellow fever fact sheet](#)
- [World Health Organization. Yellow fever](#)
- Control of Communicable Diseases Manual, 21st Edition, 2022. American Public Health Association, Edited by David L. Heymann, MD.
- [International Health Regulations, 2005, WHO, Annex 6, 7](#)
- [Biosecurity \(Entry Requirements\) Determination 2016](#)
- [The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade web site](#)
- [Smartraveller web site](#)