

# Yellow Fever Vaccine

## **What is yellow fever?**

Yellow fever is a viral disease that is transmitted by an infected mosquito. Early symptoms can include sudden onset of fever with chills, headache and muscle pain, loss of appetite, nausea, and/or vomiting. More serious systemic problems can occur including heavy and uncontrolled bleeding, kidney failure, and inflammation of the liver, heart, and brain. Although death rates are low among indigenous people, they are high among travelers who contract the disease.

## **Where can yellow fever occur?**

The disease is confined to sub-Saharan Africa and tropical South America. The virus is sustained because the infected mosquitoes have access to nonhuman primates. Therefore, the disease is most prevalent in forest and jungle areas with stagnant water. Travelers should check with the Travel Clinic to determine if their destination

## **What is the risk to me?**

Despite what may seem to be a low incidence for the disease in any country, these statistics are unreliable. Local indigenous cases are not reported or not detected because of remote locations and poor surveillance. The risk should be assumed and every precaution taken by the traveler. The risks of illness and death due to yellow fever are 10 times greater in rural West Africa than in South America.

## **How can I protect myself?**

Immunization in conjunction with mosquito-avoidance measures are recommended to minimize the potential of contracting the disease.

## **Yellow fever vaccine:**

The vaccine is only available through approved yellow fever vaccination centres of which Kingston Vaccination Travel Clinic is one. It is not available from your family doctor. This vaccine is a relatively safe and effective vaccine and is **REQUIRED FOR ADMISSION** to many tropical and subtropical countries. You will be issued an International Certificate of Vaccination to use as proof to enter and leave the country in question.

The vaccine must be given at least 10 days before entering the yellow fever region. Because of the volume of requests, you should make an appointment for your vaccination by calling (613) 507-8317 as soon as you know you are traveling.

**What are the possible side effects?**

This is a live vaccine and added precautions are taken for your safety. A thorough review of your health status is done by a travel nurse prior to administering the vaccine. As with any vaccination, you may experience redness, swelling, and tenderness at the site of the injection. You may also experience mild fatigue, muscle aches, mild headache, or low-grade fever anytime up to 10 days after receiving the injection although even these reactions are rare.

In persons over the age of 75, more serious reactions may occur that require immediate medical care. Although rare, the potential of these events increases with age and might be anticipated after the age of sixty in persons with fragile immune systems. These more serious symptoms might include:

- respiratory symptoms,
- swollen glands,
- tender abdomen,
- altered urine output, or
- elevated temperature.

Individuals experiencing any of these symptoms should seek immediate medical help.

**You should NOT have the vaccine if you:**

- suffer from acute illness, infection, or fever,
- have a known allergy to eggs, chicken, or chicken protein,
- are pregnant or lactating,
- are under 9 months of age,
- have a weakened immune system (discuss medical history with the travel nurse),
- are taking certain medications (bring a list to the Travel Clinic),
- suffer from rheumatoid arthritis,
- are taking steroids with a dose > 2mg/kg/day or > 20 mg/day of prednisone, or
- have received a live vaccine within the past month.

If you are unable to receive the vaccination, a Certificate of Exemption can be issued and you will be strongly advised to adjust your itinerary. If you elect to travel anyway to an infected region, you must accept the risks of travel without the protection of the vaccine.

**Along with being vaccinated, you can help prevent mosquito bites by:**

- staying in air-conditioned or well screened quarters,
- wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants,
- using insect repellent containing DEET on exposed skin. Follow the recommendations for the product (e.g., Deep Woods Off, Muskol) and be aware of adult and children doses,
- applying permethrin-containing repellants to clothing and bed netting,
- keeping your feet clean and dry,
- wearing light-coloured clothing, and
- avoiding scented soap, perfume, aftershave, lotion, etc.

Once administered, the vaccine is effective for at least 10 years. If an exemption is granted, it is only effective for the duration of the current itinerary.