

YELLOW FEVER

Patient Information Fact Sheet

›What is yellow fever?

Yellow fever is a viral infection that may cause a flu-like illness with symptoms including fever, chills, headaches and muscular pain. In the more severe form of the disease, the virus can affect the liver, causing bleeding and yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice), hence the name. The death rate can be over 50%. Yellow fever occurs in tropical regions of Africa and in parts of South America. Yellow fever is a very rare cause of illness in U.S. The last epidemic of yellow fever in North America occurred in New Orleans in 1905.

›How do you contract yellow fever?

Yellow fever is transmitted by the bite of an infected mosquito. The incubation period is 3–6 days.

›How is yellow fever treated and prevented?

There is no specific treatment but good nursing care and admission to hospital is important. Taking steps to avoid mosquito bites is an important strategy in preventing yellow fever infection. Immunization against yellow fever is safe and highly effective. The YF-VAX vaccination gives almost 100% protection and lasts for 10 years. An international certificate of immunization is required by many countries for entry. Travelers should be aware that the certificate is not valid until 10 days after the vaccine is administered but becomes valid immediately after the booster or subsequent doses. Certificates can be difficult to replace, travelers should keep their certificate in a safe place such as with their passport.

Remember to wear proper clothing to reduce mosquito bites. Mosquitoes may bite through clothing, so spraying clothes with repellent may provide extra protection. Clothing pretreated with permethrin, an insecticide, is commercially available too.

›Further information

Center for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/yellowfever/

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