

# YELLOW FEVER FACT SHEET

## What is yellow fever?

Yellow fever is a disease caused by a virus that is spread to people by mosquitos. The virus is closely related to West Nile virus.

## Who can get yellow fever?

Anyone. However, persons who travel to areas where yellow fever virus is found (tropical and subtropical areas in South America and Africa) may be more likely to get the disease.

## How is yellow fever spread?

Yellow fever is spread to people by the bite of an infected mosquito.

## What are the symptoms of yellow fever?

Symptoms of yellow fever include sudden onset of fever, chills, severe headache, back pain, general body aches, nausea and vomiting, fatigue and weakness. Most people improve after these initial symptoms. However, about 15% of people will have a brief period of hours to a day without symptoms and will then develop a more severe form of yellow fever. In severe cases, a person may develop high fever, jaundice (a condition that involves yellow discoloration of the skin and the whites of the eyes), bleeding (especially from the gastrointestinal tract), and eventually shock and failure of many organs. About 20-50% of people who develop severe illness may die.

## How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually begin 3–6 days after a person is bitten by a mosquito infected with the virus.

## Is there a vaccine for yellow fever?

Yes. For most people, one dose of the vaccine provides long-lasting protection. Certain people may benefit from another dose of the vaccine either because they have problems with their immune system or they are in higher-risk settings. Talk

with your health care provider to determine whether you should receive the vaccine.

## How is yellow fever treated?

There is no specific treatment for yellow fever. If possible, patients should be hospitalized for treatment of their symptoms and closely observed by healthcare providers. Rest, fluids, and use of pain medications and fever-reducing medications may relieve symptoms of fever and aching. Certain medications should be avoided, such as aspirin or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs because these may increase the risk for bleeding.

## How can people protect themselves against yellow fever?

Yellow fever can be prevented by vaccination and by avoiding mosquito bites. Anyone traveling to affected areas should take the following steps to avoid mosquito bites:

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors
- Use air conditioning if possible, keeping windows closed
- Sleep under a mosquito bed net
- Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-approved insect repellents
- Treat clothing and gear with permethrin or purchase permethrin-treated items

If you have yellow fever, protect others from getting sick by avoiding mosquito bites and wearing mosquito repellent during the five days after the fever begins.

## Where can I get more information?

Information about yellow fever and other related health topics can be found at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov). The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please visit [www.doh.dc.gov](http://www.doh.dc.gov) or call (202) 442-9371.