

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 copy of your immunization records to the travel clinic. Keep a record of all the travel vaccines you receive and take them 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.

The vaccine is recommended for workers routinely exposed to the yellow fever virus. This includes researchers and lab employees.

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

The vaccine provides effective immunity within 30 days for more than 99 percent of those vaccinated. Do not travel to affected areas before this time. A single dose 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 be given the vaccine at the country's port of entry.

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 one 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, please visit [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 one 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:

- 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

If travel cannot be avoided, discuss the benefits versus the risks of the yellow fever vaccine with your health care provider. Speak with them or a travel clinic if you have or had any of the following reactions or conditions:

- A life-threatening reaction to a previous dose of the Yellow fever vaccine, or any component of the vaccine including gelatin; the Yellow fever vaccine **does not** contain 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 vaccine preventable viral illness spread by infected mosquitoes that live in the tropical areas of Africa, and Central and South America. The virus is not spread by mosquitoes in Canada. Symptoms typically appear 3 to 6 days after infection.

Many people won't experience symptoms, but common ones include fever, muscle pain, headache, loss of appetite, and nausea or vomiting. Usually, symptoms resolve within 3 to 4 days. However, a small number of people may develop a more severe, toxic phase shortly after seeming to recover. This phase is marked by high fever, jaundice (yellowing of skin and eyes), dark urine, abdominal pain, vomiting, and potentially life-threatening bleeding. Unfortunately, about half of those who enter this toxic phase die within 10 to 14 days.

For information on preventing mosquito bites, please visit [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, please visit [HealthLinkBC File #119 The Infants Act, mature minor consent and immunization](#).

For more HealthLinkBC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/health-library/healthlinkbc-files or your local public health unit. For non-emergency health information and advice in B.C. visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca or call **8-1-1** (toll-free). For the deaf and hard of hearing, call **7-1-1**. Translation services are available in more than 130 languages on request.