

What is Yellow fever?

Yellow fever is a disease that is caused by a virus that is spread to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. This disease is only found in tropical and subtropical areas of the world, primarily South America and Africa. Therefore, only US residents that travel to these foreign countries are at risk for the disease. Yellow fever can be a fatal in approximately 20-50% of people that develop severe symptoms.

What are the symptoms of Yellow fever?

Most people that are infected with the yellow fever virus have no illness or only very mild illness. For those persons with mild illness, there symptoms will start very quickly and include: high fever, chills, nausea, vomiting, rash, severe headache, pain behind the eyes, and muscle and joint pain. Only a proportion (approximately 15%) of infected persons will develop more severe symptoms. More severe symptoms include: high fever, jaundice (a condition of yellow skin and eyes), bleeding, and shock/organ failure. Symptoms of bleeding include black vomit, nose bleed, bleeding gums, and purple pin-point spots (bruising). Approximately 20-50% of people who develop the severe form of the disease may die.

How is Yellow fever diagnosed?

A blood test can be used by a doctor to look for antibodies in a patient's blood that may show infection with the illness.

How is Yellow fever spread?

The virus can only be spread to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes get the virus by feeding on infected humans or animals. Yellow fever is not spread directly from person-to-person. Mosquitoes in Oklahoma do not carry the yellow fever virus.

What is the treatment for Yellow fever?

There are no specific treatments that help patients with yellow fever. Resting, drinking plenty of fluids, and use of pain relievers and other medication to help bring down the fever are recommended. Whenever possible, yellow fever patients with severe disease should be hospitalized where they can be closely observed and receive any needed care. Aspirin and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (e.g. ibuprofen, naproxen) should NOT be given to patients with yellow fever as these medications may increase the risk of bleeding in patients. Persons who recover from yellow fever generally have lasting immunity against any future infection with yellow fever.

Where can outbreaks of Yellow fever occur?

Dengue occurs mostly in the tropical areas of the world primarily in Africa and South America. Outbreaks can occur anywhere there are mosquitoes that are infected with yellow fever viruses.

How is Yellow fever prevented?

The best way to prevent illness is to get the yellow fever vaccination if you or someone you know plans on travelling to either South America or Africa. The vaccination is very safe and is available at international travel clinics, as well as some health departments for a fee. Remember many countries in South America and Africa require proof of yellow fever vaccine before you enter the country. Travelers to these foreign countries should also take steps to prevent mosquito bites during their stay, including:

- When indoors, stay in air-conditioned or screened areas. Use bed nets if sleeping areas are not screened or air-conditioned.
- Wear insect repellent containing an active ingredient such as ten percent to 30% DEET, Picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus (PMD), IR3535, to exposed skin and clothing when outdoors.
- Medical experts recommend applying repellent with low concentrations (10%) of DEET to infants over 2 months old.

