

What is Yellow Fever?

Yellow fever is a rapidly occurring viral illness of short duration with symptoms that may be mild to severe.

How is Yellow Fever spread?

Yellow fever is spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. A mosquito carries the virus from one person to another after sucking the blood of an infected person or animal, typically a monkey, and later biting a healthy person.

Who gets Yellow Fever?

All individuals are at risk except for those who have had yellow fever in the past or those who have been properly vaccinated against the virus. Those most at risk are travelers to areas where the virus is found, including South America and Africa. Yellow fever is not known to exist outside of these areas.

What are the symptoms of Yellow Fever?

Symptoms of yellow fever include sudden onset of fever, chills, headache, backache, all over muscle pain, a loss of strength and nausea and vomiting. Severe cases may include jaundice (a yellowing of skin and eyes), albuminuria (the presence of protein in the urine), and anuria (absence of urine).

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually occur within 3 - 6 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

How long will symptoms last?

Symptoms usually resolve quickly after they develop. However, the illness may progress to more serious complications after a brief remission of hours to a day. These complications may include liver or kidney failure, as well as hemorrhagic symptoms including: nosebleeds, bleeding gums, or visible blood in vomit and stools. The overall case-fatality rate is 20 – 50%. Lifetime immunity follows yellow fever recovery.

How is Yellow Fever prevented?

Preventing exposure to infected mosquitoes is the best means of protection from the virus causing yellow fever. Although yellow fever is not usually found in Iowa, cases have been associated with very recent travel to areas where yellow fever is present. Mosquitoes in Iowa do not carry yellow fever but they can carry other viruses. Personal protection is the best way to prevent exposure to any virus spread by mosquitoes. Please review the DEET fact sheet and follow the recommendations to reduce the risk of being bitten by mosquitoes. This recommendation is appropriate when being outdoors in Iowa, South America or Africa.

There is a vaccine available to help prevent infection and illness from yellow fever. People traveling to South America and Africa who will be at an increased risk should be vaccinated prior to traveling to these areas. Most countries where yellow fever is found typically require travelers to be vaccinated before visiting. Contact your local health department or the Iowa Department of Public Health for a vaccination site nearest you.

Can infection with Yellow Fever occur more than once?

No, recovery from yellow fever is followed by immunity against future infections.