Note: This document has been approved by FDOH central office for use by county PIOs during a public health incident. Please be sure to add appropriate letterhead before distributing.

# UPDATED: 06/2017

**Frequently Asked Questions: Yellow Fever**

# What is yellow fever?

Yellow fever is generally a mild illness caused by a mosquito-borne virus like those that cause Zika, dengue and chikungunya virus infections. Yellow fever virus is present in tropical countries in South America and Sub-Saharan Africa. Yellow fever is usually a mild, self-limited illness that can cause a high fever that starts suddenly, severe headache, loss of appetite, body aches, and a feeling of being tired. Most cases will recover within a few days; however, about 15% of ill people in the recovery phase will begin to develop symptoms again and progress to a more severe form of disease within 48 hours. This can lead to complications that may become life threatening.

# What is yellow fever transmitted?

Yellow fever virus is primarily spread through the bite of an infected *Aedes aegypti* mosquito. In an urban setting, mosquitoes acquire the virus by feeding on infected humans and then can transmit the virus to another human. Persons infected with yellow fever virus are infectious to biting mosquitoes a day or two before becoming ill, and up to 5 days after illness begins.

# Who is at risk of being infected?

Anyone who is living in or traveling to an area where yellow fever virus is found and who has not received the yellow fever vaccine is at risk for infection.

# What are the signs and symptoms of yellow fever infection?

Most persons infected with yellow fever virus have no symptoms or only a self-limited mild illness. The initial symptoms include sudden start of high fever, chills, severe headache, backache, general body aches, nausea, and vomiting, tiredness, and weakness. Most persons recover within a few days. After a brief recovery of several hours to a day, roughly 15% of cases develop a more severe form of the disease. The severe form is characterized by high fever, yellowing of skin or whites of the eye (jaundice), bleeding, and eventually shock and failure of multiple organs.

# How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

# In those who develop symptoms, the time from the bite from the infected mosquito until signs of illness appear is typically 3 to 6 days.

# What is the treatment for yellow fever?

Since there is no specific treatment for the virus, treat the symptoms by getting plenty of rest, drink fluids to prevent dehydration, and take medicines to relieve fever and pain. Pain medications should be used with caution (it is better to consult your health care provider) as some of those may increase the risk of bleeding.

# Is there a vaccine to prevent yellow fever?

Yellow fever vaccine is a live-virus vaccine that has been used for several decades. A single dose provides lifelong protection for most people. Yellow fever vaccine is recommended for people aged ≥9 months who are traveling to or living in areas at risk for yellow fever virus transmission. Yellow fever vaccine may also be used to limit/prevent outbreaks of disease, as is the case in Brazil beginning late 2016. Unfortunately, the yellow fever vaccine licensed for use in the U.S. will not be available from approximately summer 2017 to spring 2019. See below for more information.

# Where can I get the vaccine to prevent yellow fever?

Yellow fever vaccine is available only at approved vaccination centers. Locations of centers are available from your local health department or on [yellow fever vaccination clinic search page](https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/yellow-fever-vaccination-clinics/search). Unfortunately, the vaccine approved for use in the U.S. is currently unavailable due to manufacturing problems. In the meantime, another yellow fever vaccine made by the same manufacturer, which has been used for many years in other countries, has been made available in the U.S. by the FDA and CDC. Use of this vaccine requires completion of certain administrative forms and patient informed consent, because it is not yet fully licensed by the FDA.

# What should I do if I think I have yellow fever?

The best way to avoid Zika virus is to prevent mosquito bites. The Florida Department of Health encourages Florida residents and visitors to protect themselves from all mosquito-borne illnesses by taking the following precautions.

**DRAIN standing water to stop mosquitoes from multiplying**

* Drain water from garbage cans, buckets, pool covers, coolers, toys, flowerpots or any other containers where sprinkler or rainwater has collected.
* Discard old tires, drums, bottles, cans, pots and pans, broken appliances and other items that aren't being used.
* Empty and clean birdbaths and pet's water bowls at least once or twice a week.
* Protect boats and vehicles from rain with tarps that don’t accumulate water.
* Maintain swimming pools in good condition and appropriately chlorinated. Empty plastic swimming pools when not in use.

**COVER skin with clothing or repellent**

* Clothing-Wear shoes, socks, and long pants and long-sleeves. This type of protection may be necessary for people who must work in areas where mosquitoes are present.
* Repellent-Apply mosquito repellent to bare skin and clothing.
  + Always use repellents according to the label. Repellents with DEET, picaridin, IR3535, and some oil of lemon eucalyptus and para-menthane-diol products are effective.
  + Use mosquito netting to protect children younger than 2 months old. Sleep under a mosquito bed net when outside or in a room that is not screened.

**COVER doors and windows with screens**

* Repair broken screening on windows, doors, porches, and patios.

# Can yellow fever virus harm pets or livestock?

There is no evidence to date that suggests that yellow fever virus can harm domestic pets or livestock. Some monkeys and non-human primates can develop illness if infected.

# What is the status of yellow fever in Florida?

Yellow fever virus is not found in Florida. However, some parts of the state have *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes. This type of mosquito could potentially be infected if they bit an infected traveler during the short time (several days) that the virus was in the traveler’s blood. That mosquito could then go on to infect others in the area. For this reason, it is very important that travelers use mosquito bite precautions both while traveling and after returning to Florida.

What is being done to prevent transmission of yellow fever in Florida?County health department staff report suspect mosquito-borne disease cases including yellow fever to local mosquito control staff to make sure appropriate mosquito control activities are put in place. Your health care provider can request testing for yellow fever at the state public health laboratory for cases that meet specific clinical criteria. State and local health departments work closely with other partners to make sure health care providers and people at risk for yellow fever virus infections have up-to-date information about mosquito-borne diseases such as yellow fever, including how to prevent them: [www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/mosquito-borne-diseases/prevention.html](http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/mosquito-borne-diseases/prevention.html). The Department also provides weekly summaries of mosquito-borne activity reported in people and animals at: [www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/mosquito-borne-diseases/surveillance.html](http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/mosquito-borne-diseases/surveillance.html).

Do you think yellow fever will spread in Florida?We know from our experience with Zika, dengue fever and chikungunya viruses, that infected travelers can sometimes infect our local mosquito populations with viruses not normally present in Florida. However, it is very unlikely that we would have large outbreaks of yellow fever in the United States. One major reason for this is that there are vaccines that can prevent yellow fever infection. In addition, we have good housing with air conditioning and intact screens that protect us from being bitten by mosquitoes in our homes and many Florida communities have mosquito control programs. Also, when locally acquired mosquito-borne illness is present, The Department works closely with mosquito control to prevent mosquito-borne disease introductions when infected travelers return to Florida, and if local introduction were to occur, would work with local mosquito control experts to stop further spread of the virus. Mosquito control and the health department jointly provide public education on preventing mosquito bites and mosquito breeding. It is very important that all residents cooperate and drain containers on their property at least weekly to help successfully control the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito. Travelers should also use mosquito bite precautions during travel and after returning home to help prevent introduction of yellow fever and other mosquito-borne diseases not typically present in Florida.

Where can I find the most current information on yellow fever activity in Florida?Please visit the Department’s website for the latest information on the status of yellow fever in Florida at [www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/yellow-fever/index.html](http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/yellow-fever/index.html). The Department also posts a weekly report summarizing all mosquito-borne disease activity reported in the state at: <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/mosquito-borne-diseases/surveillance.html>.

Is it safe to travel to Florida?Yes, traveling to Florida is safe. Travelers to Florida should always take precautions to protect against mosquito bites (such as repellents) and sun burns (sun screen, sun glasses). For more information about mosquito-bite prevention, please see: [www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/mosquito-borne-diseases/prevention.html](http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/mosquito-borne-diseases/prevention.html)

Should I postpone my trip to Florida?  
No, yellow fever has not been identified in Florida and there is no reason related to yellow fever to postpone your travel to Florida. Persons planning international travel should always consult with their health care provider or a travel clinic to confirm if yellow fever vaccination or other vaccines or medications are recommended for travel to a particular destination outside the U.S

Who can I call to spray for mosquitoes around my house?In Florida, many counties and cities have mosquito control services. Please contact your county or city government offices to find out if these services are available in your area. The mosquitoes that can spread yellow fever, breed in small containers so you can limit your risk by making sure to dump all sources of standing water in bird baths, flower pots, boat tarps, etc. on your property at least weekly.

Additional InformationFor more information on mosquito bite prevention visit Florida Department of Health,  
[www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/mosquito-borne-diseases/prevention.html](http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/mosquito-borne-diseases/prevention.html).   
  
For information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) visit [www.cdc.gov/yellowfever/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/yellowfever/index.html).

General information in Spanish [www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs100/es/](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs100/es/).

For Mosquito-borne disease and vector surveillance, please visit [www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/mosquito-borne-diseases/surveillance.html](http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/mosquito-borne-diseases/surveillance.html) and [www.cdc.gov/zika/vector/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/zika/vector/index.html).