August 2013

Yellow Fever

What is yellow fever?

Yellow fever is a disease caused by a virus and spread by the bite of certain mosquitoes. It does not occur in the U.S., but is common in some parts of Africa and South America.

Who gets yellow fever?

Yellow fever occurs in people living or traveling in tropical or subtropical areas. It is a very rare cause of illness in U.S. travelers to these areas.

How is yellow fever spread?

The disease is not spread directly from person to person. It is spread by the bite of an infected *Aedes aegypti* mosquito. A mosquito that bites a person with yellow fever within the first five days of illness may transmit the disease to other people it bites later.

What are the symptoms of yellow fever?

The symptoms of yellow fever include fever, chills, severe headache, back pain, general body aches, nausea, vomiting, fatigue and weakness. Most people improve after these initial symptoms occur. Some cases progress to more serious forms of illness, with symptoms including jaundice (yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes), high fever, bleeding (especially in the gastrointestinal tract), and eventually shock and failure of many organs.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

The symptoms appear from three to six days after the mosquito bite.

Does past infection with yellow fever make a person immune?

Yes, people who have had yellow fever will not get the disease again.

How is yellow fever diagnosed?

The disease may be confirmed by a blood test or various other laboratory tests.

What is the treatment for yellow fever?

There is no specific treatment for yellow fever, except to relieve the symptoms as much as

possible. If possible, patients with yellow fever should be hospitalized for treatment of their symptoms and close observation by health care workers. Certain medications should be avoided, such as aspirin or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, because these may increase the risk of bleeding. The disease can be fatal.

How can yellow fever be prevented?

Vaccination and mosquito control are used to prevent yellow fever in countries where the disease occurs. People traveling to these areas should receive the vaccination prior to travel. Yellow fever vaccine is recommended for people age nine months or older who are traveling to or living in areas at risk for yellow fever virus transmission in South America and Africa. Certain individuals should not receive the vaccine. Consult with your healthcare provider to determine if you can safely receive the vaccine. Proof of this vaccine may be officially required under International Health Regulations for entry into some countries if the traveler is entering from a yellow fever endemic area.

When outdoors in areas where yellow fever occurs, use an effective insect repellent on exposed skin. When weather permits, wear long sleeves, long pants and socks when outdoors. Spraying clothes with appropriate repellent gives extra protection. Finally, staying in lodging with screens or air-conditioned rooms will also reduce risk of mosquito bites.

How can I get more information about yellow fever?

1) If you have concerns about yellow fever, contact your healthcare provider.

2) Call your local health department. A directory of local health departments is located at http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/LHD/index.htm.

3) Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at http://www.cdc.gov/yellowfever/.

Where can I obtain yellow fever vaccine?
A list of clinics in Virginia where yellow fever vaccine can be obtained is located at http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/Epidemiology/Immunization/international.htm.