

## PREVENTION OF YELLOW FEVER IMPORTATION INTO SOUTH AFRICA

### 1. What is yellow fever?

Yellow fever is an acute viral haemorrhagic disease (bleeding disease) caused by the yellow fever virus and transmitted through bite of an infected female *Aedes* mosquito vector usually *Aedes aegypti*. The incubation period of the infection is usually 3 to 6 days. The illness can vary from mild to severe and can result in death. Some patients may experience jaundice which causes yellowing of the eyes and skin, hence the name yellow fever. The symptoms may mimic malaria, or other travel-associated diseases.

### 2. Symptoms and treatment

Symptoms include a sudden onset of fever, chills, headache, backache, muscle pain, weakness, nausea, vomiting and jaundice. In very severe cases there may be nose bleeds, vomiting of blood and blood in the stools. There is no specific treatment for yellow fever besides supportive care. About 50% of the severely affected persons will die from the disease. ***If a person who has been in a country where yellow fever is known to occur, and develops signs and symptoms, they should contact their nearest health facility and provide their travel history.***

### 3. Mode of transmission and risk factors for transmission in South Africa

There is no evidence that yellow fever has ever occurred in South Africa, however *Aedes* mosquitoes are found in South Africa. *Aedes* mosquitoes thrive in the leafy wells of plants that trap water following rains, in pools of water, or water storage vessels.

The following are ways in which the virus and the vector can be introduced into the country:

- Infected humans can travel between risk areas and South Africa. If this happens in sufficient numbers, and mosquito vectors are present locally, the mosquito population can become infected and local transmission may occur.
- Infected mosquitoes could enter South Africa through the importation of certain items such as used tyre casings.

### 4. Prevention methods in South Africa

Vaccination is the single most important measure for preventing infection from yellow fever. Travellers from or travelling to risk countries (as listed below) should obtain the necessary vaccinations at least ten days prior to departing to their destination. ***A single dose of Yellow Fever vaccine provides protection for life.***

Measures to prevent the introduction of the vector (mosquito) and/or the virus into the country through vectors and/ or persons arriving from yellow fever high risk countries, in line with the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005) are as follows:

1. Port health officials will request vaccination certificates from individuals travelling from areas determined by the WHO to be at risk of yellow fever transmission (see below) and individuals who have been in transit for more than 12 hours through the airport of a country with risk of yellow fever transmission. Persons who are unable to produce a valid vaccination certificate:
  - May be refused entry; or
  - May be placed under quarantine surveillance for a period of six days; or until their certificate becomes valid.
  - Should provide an exemption certificate for medical reasons, but will be allowed entry and;
    - Be placed under quarantine surveillance and
    - Be required to report any fever or other symptoms to the health authorities;
2. Disinsection of aircraft, ships, tyre casing consignments and other modes of transportation coming from yellow fever risk areas.

Travellers should take precautionary measures to prevent mosquito bites such as:

- Wearing long-sleeved shirt and long pants.
- Applying an insect repellent containing \*DEET to exposed skin.
- Sleeping under mosquito-proof bed nets
- Spraying the inside of house or rooms with an approved repellent.
- Staying and sleeping in screened-in or air-conditioned rooms.
- Eliminating all mosquito breeding sites.
- If you are using sunscreen apply the sunscreen before applying insect repellent

Remember when travelling to adhere to other protective and preventive measures such as taking malaria preventive medication if travelling to malaria areas.

**NB: Definition of a valid Yellow fever vaccination certificate** – Yellow fever vaccine should be approved by the World Health Organization (WHO) and administered at least 10 days before departure to South Africa at a Yellow Fever approved vaccination centre. If vaccination is administered less than 10 days before departure, measures as above will be applied. **The vaccine offers protection 10 days after administration and provides lifetime immunity.**

**The table below is the list of countries for which a Yellow Fever vaccination certificate is required for entry into South Africa**

AFRICA		CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA
Angola	Guinea	Argentina
Benin	Guinea-Bissau	Bolivia
Burkina Faso	Kenya	Brazil
Burundi	Liberia	Colombia
Cameroon	Mali	Ecuador
Central African Republic	Mauritania	French Guiana
Chad	Niger	Guyana
Congo	Nigeria	Panama
Côte d'Ivoire	Senegal	Paraguay
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Sierra Leone	Peru
Equatorial Guinea	Southern Sudan	Suriname
Ethiopia	Sudan	Trinidad and Tobago
Gabon	Togo	Venezuela
Gambia	Uganda	
Ghana		

[http://www.who.int/ith/ITH\\_Annex\\_I.pdf](http://www.who.int/ith/ITH_Annex_I.pdf)

\*N,N-diethyl-3-methylbenzamide