

Yellow Fever Vaccine Shortage

Yellow fever virus is found in tropical and subtropical areas in South America and Africa. The virus is transmitted to people by the bite of an infected mosquito. Yellow fever is a very rare cause of illness in U.S. travelers. Illness ranges in severity from a self-limited febrile illness to severe liver disease with bleeding.

Yellow fever disease is diagnosed based on symptoms, physical findings, laboratory testing, and travel history, including the possibility of exposure to infected mosquitoes. There is no specific treatment for yellow fever; care is based on symptoms. Steps to prevent yellow fever virus infection include using insect repellent, wearing protective clothing, and getting vaccinated.

Effective and safe yellow fever vaccines are available to prevent yellow fever disease among people traveling to countries with yellow fever virus transmission and to comply with individual country yellow fever vaccination entry requirements. Unfortunately, due to a shortage of YF-Vax, the only U.S. produced vaccine; a similar product has been imported from France.

Sanofi Pasteur, the manufacturer of YF-Vax, experienced problems while transferring from an old production facility to a newer one. Batches of vaccine were compromised leaving the U.S. with no vaccine. To avoid a lapse in yellow fever vaccine availability to persons in the U.S. population for whom yellow fever vaccination is indicated, public health officials and private partners collaborated in obtaining an application to bring the vaccine, known as Stamaril, to the U.S. Stamaril is also produced by Sanofi Pasteur.

Domestic production of yellow fever vaccine in the U.S. will resume in 2018. Until that time, the CDC identified sites that have the vaccine to provide reasonable accessibility to it. A list of Maryland clinics that currently are sites for Stamaril vaccination is available on the CDC website. Travelers interested in obtaining the yellow fever vaccine may also contact Lisa Bohrer, R.N., BC, Travel Vaccine Specialist for PharmaCare who can also provide other travel information including recommended vaccines for traveling and precautions to take when leaving the U.S.

Source: www.cdc.gov/yellowfever

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