

## Infants under 9 months of age

### The risk of yellow fever vaccine-associated encephalitis is higher in infants under nine months of age

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The risk of yellow fever (YF) vaccine-associated encephalitis is higher in infants under nine months of age [1]. The risk is inversely proportional to age (highest risk for the youngest infants) [1-3]. During the 1950s, when there was no age restriction on the use of the YF vaccine, 15 cases of encephalitis were reported in infants. Of the 15 cases, 13 (87%) occurred in infants under four months of age and all were under seven months of age (age was not documented in the remaining two cases) [2]. The vaccine should therefore never be administered to infants under six months of age [1, 2].

Infants aged six to nine months should only be immunised if the risk of YF during travel is unavoidable; expert opinion should be sought in these situations [1]. For this age group, vaccination is usually only recommended during epidemics/outbreaks when the risk of YF virus transmission may be very high [[see TravelHealthPro Country Information pages](#)].

Individual itineraries should be considered on a case-by-case basis, and if possible, travel should be delayed until the infant is 9 months of age [2].

When travel is unavoidable, and YF vaccine is not an option, particular care with insect bite avoidance day and night should be recommended.

Very young children (aged less than 2 years) are recommended to have a reinforcing dose once the child is 2 years or older, depending on the next planned travel to an area of risk. This is due to waning seroprotection, which may occur 3 months to 5 years following primary vaccination in some children who are vaccinated under 2 years of age [1, 4-5].

## REFERENCES

- [1. UK Health Security Agency. Yellow Fever. Ch 35. In: Immunisation against infectious disease. March 2024 \[Accessed 23 August 2024\]](#)
- 2. Plotkin, S.A. Orenstein, W.A and Offit, P.A Yellow fever vaccine, Ch 38 in Vaccines 6<sup>th</sup> edition,**



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3. [World Health Organization, Vaccines and vaccination against yellow fever WHO Position Paper - June 2013, weekly epidemiological record, 5 July 2013](#)
4. [SAGE Working Group, Background Paper on Yellow Fever Vaccine 19 March 2013](#)
5. [Kling K, Domingo C, Bogdan C, et al. Duration of Protection after Vaccination against Yellow Fever: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. CID. 2022; 75 \(12\)](#)