



MINISTRY OF **HEALTH & WELLNESS**

INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL AND HEALTH, JAMAICA

International travel can pose various risks to health, depending on the characteristics of both the traveler and the travel. Travelers may encounter sudden and significant changes in altitude, humidity, microbes, and temperature, which can result in ill health. In addition, serious health risks may arise in areas where accommodation is of poor quality, hygiene and sanitation are inadequate, medical services are not well developed and clean water is unavailable. Jamaica has a mature health and medical services system that includes a robust National Surveillance System and Environmental Health Programme that addresses among other things, safety concerns in facilities for accommodation and provision of safe water, as well as required special provisions for acute public health events as indicated.

Jamaica's International Travel and Health Programme is guided by the WHO/PAHO recommendations. The programme includes providing general guidelines with respect to infectious diseases for travelers entering the country as part of official visits or events involving international participants. Infectious diseases involving potential health risks for travelers are grouped as follows:

- diseases that have a sufficiently high global or regional prevalence to constitute a significant risk for travelers;
- diseases that are severe and life-threatening, even though the risk of exposure may be low for most travelers;
- diseases for which the perceived risk may be much greater than the real risk, and which may therefore cause anxiety to travelers;
- diseases that involve a public health risk due to transmission of infection to others by the infected traveler.

The diseases outlined below are currently affecting several territories across the globe. However, Jamaica continues to remain free from most of these diseases and as such must maintain measures to sustain this status. Public Health measures are in place for processing persons desirous of entering Jamaica who have travelled to areas where there have been confirmed cases of communicable diseases of current concern.

Regional or Global Outbreaks

1. Multi-country Monkeypox Outbreak
2. COVID19 Pandemic

Vector-related threats:

- I. Yellow Fever is common in the tropical and subtropical areas of South America and Africa. Worldwide, about 600 million people live in endemic areas. The yellow fever virus is mainly transmitted through the bite of an infected *Aedes aegypti* mosquito. In accordance with the Public Health Act, Quarantine Act 1951, Revised 1991, travelers are required to provide **Verification of the International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis (ICVP)** for Yellow Fever if the passenger is travelling from Yellow Fever Endemic areas.
- II. Malaria is common in Africa, parts of South and Central America as well as in Asia. It is transmitted by the bite of an infected *Anopheles* mosquito. Jamaica successfully eliminated Malaria in 2011 and as such remains vulnerable to reintroduction as the vector for spread is still present.

Highly infectious infections:

- I. Ebola Virus disease is found in selected countries in West Africa and is transmitted from person to person by means of direct contact with the body fluids of infected symptomatic persons. The WHO's Emergency Committee has as of July 2019 declared the current outbreak of EVD in the DRC as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.
- II. Haemorrhagic Fever Outbreak due to Arena Virus was reported by the PAHO/WHO in July 2019 in the Plurinational State of Bolivia.
- III. Cholera is currently found in Hispaniola, Africa, Asia, and Oceania and is transmitted by ingestion of fecally contaminated food and water.

Routine Vaccine Preventable Conditions:

As Jamaica has successfully implemented its national immunization Programme against vaccine-preventable diseases, it is of paramount importance that the reintroduction of diseases such as Measles and Diphtheria does not occur. In accordance with Jamaica's Public Health (Immunization) Regulations 1986, Jamaican children are routinely vaccinated against Tuberculosis, Poliomyelitis, Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis, Hepatitis B and Haemophilus Influenza Type B. Measles and Diphtheria are of particular concern at this time.

- I. Measles is found across the globe and is a highly contagious virus that lives in the nose, throat and mucus of an infected person. It can spread to others through coughing and sneezing. Also, the measles virus can live for up to two hours in an airspace where the infected person coughed or sneezed.
- II. Diphtheria there are many countries in which diphtheria still circulates including the Asian and African regions.

Seasonal Outbreaks:

- I. Seasonal influenza is an acute viral infection that spreads easily from person to person and can affect any age group. In temperate climates, seasonal epidemics occur mainly during winter while in tropical regions, the seasonality is less obvious and epidemics can occur throughout the year. Seasonal influenza is a serious public health problem that causes severe illness and death in high-risk populations. There are 4 types of seasonal influenza viruses, types A, B, C, and D, with **A and B** causing **seasonal epidemics** of disease. **Influenza A viruses** are further classified into subtypes and currently, the circulating ones in humans are subtype **A (H1N1)** and **A (H3N2)**. Only type A viruses are known to have caused pandemics.

Traveler vaccinations

WHO emphasizes that all travelers (domestic and international) should be up to date with routine vaccinations. Travel is a good opportunity for healthcare providers to review the immunization status of infants, children, adolescents, and adults.

Travelers should be advised to check that they have been fully vaccinated against measles, rubella, mumps, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), and poliomyelitis before starting their travel. Non-immunized or incompletely immunized travelers should be offered the routine vaccinations recommended in their national immunization schedules, in addition to those needed for international travel (e.g. yellow fever vaccine).

In keeping with WHO standards, evidence of immunity to measles and rubella for international travelers includes:

- written documentation of having received the measles and rubella vaccines.
- laboratory evidence of rubella and measles immunity (a positive serologic test for the measles and rubella-specific IgG antibodies)

Health & Travel Requirements

I. COVID-19

The requirement for travelers to present a negative COVID test prior to travel to Jamaica ended on 15 April 2022. All travelers arriving in Jamaica may still be tested for COVID-19 if assessed as high-risk as a result of exhibiting symptoms, exposure to people who have tested positive, belonging to a high-risk group, or other risk factors. Travelers may be screened for symptoms at the airport.

II. YELLOW FEVER

Jamaica has a travel requirement in place for Yellow Fever. All persons older than one year, who are travelling from a country where there is a risk of Yellow Fever transmission, and persons who are transiting through a country with a risk of Yellow Fever transmission for more than twelve hours, are required to show proof of vaccination against Yellow Fever before entering the country. Only individuals travelling from countries with a risk of Yellow fever transmission, as listed on the current World Health Organization (WHO) International Travel and Health website, are required to provide proof of vaccination for entry into Jamaica.

Travellers from the following countries need to show **proof of vaccination against Yellow Fever:**

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

Recommendations by PAHO/WHO- Vaccination

The yellow fever vaccine is safe and affordable and provides immunity against the disease for 80 to 100% of those vaccinated after 10 days and 99% immunity after 30 days. A single dose provides life-long protection against yellow fever disease. A booster dose of the yellow fever vaccine is not needed. Severe side effects are extremely rare.

There are limitations on the availability of vaccines on the world market and so PAHO/WHO recommends:

- Countries that are not currently experiencing outbreaks should not conduct yellow fever immunization campaigns.
- Travelers to countries at risk of yellow fever transmission should be encouraged to receive the vaccine at least 10 days before traveling and to avoid revaccination.
- Depending on vaccine availabilities, countries should have a small stock that allows them to respond to outbreaks.

The yellow fever vaccine is available at two (2) locations in Jamaica:

- The Comprehensive Health Center, 55 Slipse Pen Road Kingston 5, on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm. It is also available at
- The Type 5 Health Center, 2 Creek Street Montego Bay, on Mondays and Thursdays from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.

III. Travellers from the following countries need to show **proof of vaccination against measles, rubella, and polio**: *Albania, Belarus, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Republic of Slovenia*

IV. Malaria is one of the most important infectious disease threats for travelers. However, there are no travel requirements for Malaria in place for Jamaica. Persons arriving from countries endemic to Malaria will be interviewed at the Health Desk at the airport. Persons who are arriving from countries with a risk for transmission of other Diseases of Public Health concern will be treated as per any restrictions/instructions in place at the time from the Ministry of Health and Wellness.

Note: All travellers to Jamaica are given a **Health Alert Card** on arrival. This card contains relevant contact information for the National Health Authority and instructions to follow in the event they start to exhibit/ develop symptoms.