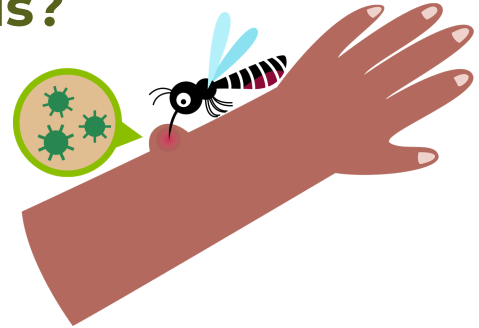


# Japanese encephalitis: What you need to know

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## What is Japanese encephalitis?

Japanese encephalitis is an infectious mosquito-borne illness. The mosquitoes that transmit the disease usually bite from sunset to sunrise, so the risk of infection is higher when spending time outdoors during these hours.



Japanese encephalitis is most commonly found throughout much of Asia and in parts of Oceania. The risk of infection is higher in rural and agricultural areas where the disease is prevalent, particularly for travellers who stay for longer periods and participate in outdoor activities such as hiking, cycling, camping, or fieldwork. Travellers who remain mainly in urban areas of affected countries and who spend limited time outdoors generally have a low risk of infection.

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## What are the symptoms?

Most people infected with Japanese encephalitis do not develop symptoms. When symptoms do occur, they typically appear 5 to 15 days after infection. Fewer than 1% of infected individuals develop encephalitis (swelling of the brain), but among those who do, the illness can be severe. About 20–30% of severe cases are fatal, and many survivors experience long-term neurological damage. Infants and older adults are at the highest risk of developing encephalitis.

Severe disease usually begins suddenly with fever, headache, and vomiting. Additional symptoms may include seizures, stiff neck, confusion, weakness, movement disorders, behaviour or mental changes, paralysis, coma, and permanent brain or nerve damage.

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## What are the treatment options?

There is no specific treatment for Japanese encephalitis, but seeking prompt medical care can help manage symptoms and support recovery.

## How do you prevent Japanese encephalitis?

Taking steps to prevent mosquito bites when travelling to affected areas is strongly recommended.

### Tips on mosquito bite prevention:

- **Avoid peak mosquito activity when possible:** Limit outdoor activities between dusk and dawn, particularly in rural or forested areas.
- **Use insect repellent properly:** Apply an approved insect repellent with a Pest Control Products (PCP) registration number. Reinforce the importance of following label directions, including age-specific precautions and reapplication timing.
- **Wear protective clothing:** Wear loose-fitting, light-coloured clothing made from tightly woven fabrics (e.g., nylon or polyester). Long sleeves, long pants, socks, and closed-toe shoes provide additional protection.
- **Use physical barriers:** Use mosquito netting when sleeping outdoors or in accommodations without screened windows or air conditioning.
- **Ensure accommodations are protected:** Choose accommodations with intact window and door screens. Travellers staying longer should inspect living spaces for gaps or damaged screens and arrange repairs if possible.
- **Reduce indoor mosquito exposure:** Using tools such as fly swatters or electric traps indoors can help reduce mosquito presence.



In Canada, a **Japanese encephalitis vaccine** is approved for use in some travellers, depending on individual risk factors.

Travellers are encouraged to consult a healthcare professional or visit a travel health clinic at least 6 weeks before departure to receive personalized health advice and vaccine recommendations.

## Who should get the vaccine?

The Japanese encephalitis vaccine is recommended for healthy individuals aged 2 months and older who are at high risk of infection, such as those spending extended periods abroad, making multiple trips, working with the virus, or having significant exposure in rural areas of endemic regions.

Travellers should complete their primary immunization series at least 7 days before travel to ensure optimal protection.

While not routinely recommended, the Japanese encephalitis vaccine may be offered to the following populations when travel to high-risk areas is unavoidable:

- pregnant and breastfeeding people
- immunocompromised individuals

Booster doses may be given 12 to 24 months after the primary series for people who remain at risk and want continued protection.



## Who should NOT get the vaccine?

The Japanese encephalitis vaccine is **not** recommended for people who have had a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to a previous dose or who have a known severe allergy to any vaccine component. Vaccination should be postponed in people with severe acute illness, but it does not need to be delayed for those with mild or moderate illness, even if fever is present.

## Are you protected against Japanese encephalitis?

Talk to your healthcare provider or visit a travel health clinic to discuss how to protect yourself or your children from Japanese encephalitis when travelling, and whether the vaccine may be a suitable option for you.



# Japanese encephalitis: What you need to know



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