

US facing shortage of yellow fever vaccine for travelers

April 28 2017, by Mike Stobbe



In this July 21, 2016 file photo, residents of the Kisenso district of Kinshasa, receive yellow fever vaccines. The United States is facing a looming shortage of a yellow fever vaccine for travelers, potentially affecting hundreds of thousands who journey to countries where the deadly disease spreads. Doses of the one vaccine licensed in the U.S. will run out as early as next month, U.S. health officials said Friday, April 28, 2017. They said they are making arrangements to bring in another vaccine, licensed in Europe, on a limited basis.(AP Photo/Jerome Delay)

Americans who need a yellow fever shot for travel may soon have a harder getting it.

A manufacturing problem has created a shortage of the only version of the vaccine licensed in the U.S. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Friday that doses could run out as early as next month. Officials are bringing in another vaccine that's used in other countries, but it will be available at only about 250 of the 4,000 U.S. clinics that give the shot.

The \$141 vaccine is recommended for travelers to certain areas in South America and Africa, and about 20 countries require proof of vaccination for entry. For most people, only one dose of vaccine is needed in their lifetime to protect against the potentially deadly disease.

Travelers who want the vaccine will need to plan ahead, said the CDC's Dr. Martin Cetron.

"It may take longer and you may have to travel a greater distance" to get a shot, he said.

Yellow fever was wiped out in the U.S. over a century ago, and the shot is not part of routine vaccinations.

The yellow fever virus is spread by the same mosquito that transmits other tropical diseases, including Zika. Most people improve after a round of fever, chills and other symptoms. But roughly 15 percent get more seriously ill with internal bleeding and organ failure.

Stockpiles of the vaccine have been strained globally, and shortages were a major problem during recent outbreaks in Africa. A smaller outbreak emerged this year in Brazil.

Drugmaker Sanofi Pasteur said it stopped making the U.S.-licensed vaccine because of broken equipment at its Swiftwater, Pennsylvania, plant. Production is being shifted to a new factory opening next year, company officials said.

More information: CDC report: www.cdc.gov/mmwr

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