

HEALTH

AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

- ✚ Myanmar medical care is dismal, medical facilities outside Yangon are extremely limited. In the event that you require any surgical treatment, you will likely need to be evacuated to Bangkok.
- ✚ Buying medication over the counter is not recommended in Myanmar, as fake medications and poorly stored or out-of-date drugs are common.

BEFORE YOU GO

All travelers should consult their doctor with regards to vaccinations and up-to-date health advice at least 4-8 weeks before departure.

- ✚ Pack any medications in clearly labelled containers.
- ✚ Bring a letter from your doctor describing your medical conditions and medications.
- ✚ If carrying syringes or needles, have a physician's letter documenting their medical necessity.
- ✚ If you have a heart condition, bring a copy of a recent ECG.
- ✚ Bring extra supplies of any regular medication (in case of loss or theft).

RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends the following vaccinations for travellers to Southeast Asia:

- ✚ **Adult diphtheria** and tetanus Single booster recommended if you've had none in the previous 10 years.
- ✚ **Hepatitis A:** All travellers to Southeast Asia should be vaccinated against hepatitis A. Travelers can get hepatitis A through contaminated food or water in Southeast Asia, regardless of where they are eating or staying. Vaccine is recommended for all travelers over one year of age. It should be given at least two weeks (preferably four weeks or more) before departure. A booster should be given 6-12 months later to confer long-term immunity.
- ✚ **Hepatitis B:** Travellers can get hepatitis B through sexual contact, contaminated needles, and blood products, so this vaccine is recommended if you might have sex with a new partner, get a tattoo or piercing, or have any medical procedures.
- ✚ **Measles, mumps and rubella(MMR):** Measles, mumps, and rubella are serious diseases and vaccines against them are required unless you have had the diseases. Many young adults require a booster.
- ✚ **Typhoid:** Travelers can get typhoid through contaminated food or water in Southeast Asia. this vaccine is recommended for most travelers, especially if you are staying with friends or relatives, visiting smaller cities or rural areas, or if you are an adventurous eater.
- ✚ **Varicella** If you haven't had chickenpox, discuss this vaccination with your doctor.

Other health risks in Myanmar include

- ✚ **Travelers' diarrhea** is the most common travel-related ailment. The cornerstone of prevention is food and water precautions, as outlined below. All travelers should bring along an antibiotic and an antidiarrheal drug to be started promptly if significant diarrhea occurs, defined as three or more loose stools in an 8-hour period or five or more loose stools in a 24-hour period, especially if associated with nausea, vomiting, cramps, fever or blood in the stool.
- ✚ **Polio:** You may need a polio vaccine before your trip to Myanmar.
 - If you were vaccinated against polio as a child but have never had a polio booster dose as an adult, you should get this booster dose. Adults need only one polio booster in their lives.
 - All children should be up-to-date in their polio immunizations and any adult who never completed the initial series of immunizations should do so before departure.
- ✚ **Japanese Encephalitis:** All children should be up-to-date in their polio immunizations and any adult who never completed the initial series of immunivaccine is recommended for those who expect to spend a month or more in rural areas and for short-term travelers who may spend substantial time outdoors or engage in extensive outdoor activities in rural or agricultural areas, especially in the evening. Japanese encephalitis is transmitted by mosquito bites and appears to occur throughout Myanmar, with peak incidence from May through October. zations should do so before departure.
- ✚ **Malaria:**
 - When traveling in Myanmar, you should avoid mosquito bites to prevent malaria. You may need to take prescription medicine before, during, and after your trip to prevent malaria, depending on your travel plans, such as where you are going, when you are traveling, and if you are spending a lot of time outdoors or sleeping outside.
 - In Myanmar: prophylaxis is recommended for all areas below 1000 m (3,281 ft), except for the cities of Mandalay and Rangoon (Yangon). The risk is greatest in (a) Karen State year-round; (b) from March through December in Chin, Kachin, Kayah, Mon, Rakhine, and Shan states, Pegu Division, and Hlegu, Hmawbi, and Taikkyi townships of Yangon (formerly Rangoon) Division; (c) in the rural areas of Tenasserim Division from April through December; (d) in the rural areas of Magwe Division, and in Sagaing Division from June through November.
- ✚ **Rabies:** Rabies can be found in dogs, bats, and other mammals in Myanmar, so this vaccine is recommended for the following groups:
 - Travelers involved in outdoor and other activities (such as camping, hiking, biking, adventure travel, and caving) that put them at risk for animal bites.
 - People who will be working with or around animals (such as veterinarians, wildlife professionals, and researchers).
 - People who are taking long trips or moving to Myanmar
 - Children, because they tend to play with animals, might not report bites, and are more likely to have animal bites on their head and neck.
- ✚ **Yellow Fever:** vaccine is **required** for all travelers arriving from a country in [Africa or the Americas](#) with risk of yellow fever transmission, for travelers who have been in transit more than 12 hours in an airport located in a country with risk of yellow fever transmission, and

for nationals and residents of Myanmar who are departing for a yellow-fever-infected country, but is not recommended or required otherwise. Yellow fever vaccine must be administered at an approved yellow fever vaccination center, which will give each vaccinee a fully validated International Certificate of Vaccination. Yellow fever vaccine should not in general be given to those younger than nine months of age, pregnant, immunocompromised, or allergic to eggs.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Insect Bites & Stings


- Bedbugs Don't carry disease but their bites are very itchy. They live in the cracks of furniture and walls and then migrate to the bed at night to feed on you. You can treat the itch with an antihistamine.
- Jellyfish In Myanmar waters most are not dangerous. If stung, pour vinegar onto the affected area to neutralise the poison. Take painkillers and seek medical advice if your condition worsens.
- Leeches Found in humid rainforest areas. Don't transmit any disease but their bites can be itchy for weeks afterwards and can easily become infected. Apply an iodine-based antiseptic to any leech bite to help prevent infection.
- Lice Most commonly inhabit your head and pubic area. Transmission is via close contact with an infected person. Treat with numerous applications of an antilice shampoo, such as Permethrin.
- Ticks Contracted after walking in rural areas. If you are bitten and experience symptoms such as a rash at the site of the bite or elsewhere, fever, or muscle aches, see a doctor. Doxycycline prevents tick-borne diseases.


Heat


- Many parts of Myanmar are hot and humid throughout the year. It can take up to two weeks to adapt to the hot climate. Swelling of the feet and ankles is common, as are muscle cramps caused by excessive sweating. Prevent these by avoiding dehydration and excessive activity in the heat.
- Dehydration is the main contributor to heat exhaustion. Symptoms include feeling weak; headache; irritability; nausea or vomiting; sweaty skin; a fast, weak pulse; and a normal or slightly elevated body temperature. Treat by getting out of the heat, applying cool wet cloths to the skin, lying flat with legs raised and rehydrating with water containing a quarter of a teaspoon of salt per litre.
- Heatstroke is a serious medical emergency. Symptoms come on suddenly and include weakness, nausea, a hot dry body with a body temperature of over 41°C, dizziness, confusion, loss of coordination, fits and eventual collapse and loss of consciousness. Seek medical help and commence cooling by getting the person out of the heat, removing their clothes, and applying cool wet cloths or ice to their body, especially to the groin and armpits.
- Prickly heat – an itchy rash of tiny lumps – is caused by sweat being trapped under the skin. Treat by moving out of the heat and into an air-conditioned area for a few hours and by having cool showers. Creams and ointments clog the skin so they should be avoided.

Skin Problems

- Fungal rashes are common in humid climates. There are two common fungal rashes that affect travellers. The first occurs in moist areas that receive less air, such as the groin, the armpits and between the toes. It starts as a red patch that slowly spreads and is usually itchy. Treatment involves keeping the skin dry, avoiding chafing and using an antifungal cream such as Clotrimazole or Lamisil. Tinea versicolor is also common – this fungus causes small, light-coloured patches, most commonly on the back, chest and shoulders. Consult a doctor.
- Cuts and scratches easily become infected in humid climates. Take meticulous care of any cuts and scratches to prevent complications, such as abscesses. Immediately wash all wounds in clean water and apply antiseptic. If you develop signs of infection (increasing pain and redness) see a doctor. Divers and surfers should be particularly careful with coral cuts as they easily become infected.

 **Snakes:** Myanmar is home to many species of both poisonous and harmless snakes. Assume all snakes are poisonous and never try to catch one. Always wear boots and long pants if walking in an area that may have snakes. First aid in the event of a snakebite involves pressure immobilisation with an elastic bandage firmly wrapped around the affected limb, starting at the bite site and working up towards the chest. The bandage should not be so tight that the circulation is cut off, and the fingers or toes should be kept free so the circulation can be checked. Immobilise the limb with a splint and carry the victim to medical attention. Do not use tourniquets or try to suck the venom out. Antivenom is available for most species.

 **Air Pollution:** Air pollution, particularly vehicle pollution, is an increasing problem, particularly in Yangon. If you have severe respiratory problems speak with your doctor before travelling to any heavily polluted urban centres. This pollution also causes minor respiratory problems, such as sinusitis, dry throat and irritated eyes. If troubled by the pollution, leave the city for a few days and get some fresh air.

 **Food:** Rather than being overly concerned at street stalls, where food is freshly cooked to order, note that eating in restaurants is the biggest risk factor for contracting traveller's diarrhoea. Avoid shellfish, and food that has been sitting around in buffets. Peel all fruit, cook vegetables and soak salads in iodine water for at least 20 minutes. Eat in busy restaurants with a high turnover of customers.

Drinking Water

- Never drink tap water.
- Check bottled water seals are intact at purchase.
- Boiling water is the most efficient method of purifying it.
- Iodine, the best chemical purifier, should not be used by pregnant women or those who suffer with thyroid problems.