

## Quick Facts

### About Malaria

#### What is Malaria?

Malaria is a serious, sometimes fatal, blood disease caused by a parasite. The parasites attack the red blood cells and cause a sudden increase in temperature. There are an estimated 300 to 500 million human cases each year and over 1 million deaths worldwide.

#### How is Malaria spread?

Malaria is transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected Anopheles mosquito.

Malaria can also be transmitted through blood transfusion, organ transplant, or the shared use of needles or syringes contaminated with blood. Malaria may also be transmitted from a mother to her unborn infant before or during delivery.

#### Who is at risk for malaria?

Anyone who travels to or lives in areas where malaria is transmitted are at risk. Malaria occurs in over 100 countries. The parasite exists in large areas of Central and South America, Hispaniola (Haiti and Dominican Republic), Africa, the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Oceania. The malaria parasite has been eliminated from the United States but we are at constant risk of reintroduction.

## **How do I know if I have malaria?**

The most common symptoms of malaria are fever, chills, sweats, headache, body aches, and lethargy. Nausea and vomiting may also occur. Sometimes malaria may cause anemia and jaundice (yellow coloring of the skin) because of the loss of red blood cells. More serious symptoms can develop if a person is infected with the most harmful type of malaria, *Plasmodium falciparum*. If this type is not treated, it can lead to coma or death.

## **How can malaria be treated?**

Malaria can be cured with prescription drugs. However, there are some drug resistant strains.

## **How is malaria prevented?**

There is no vaccine currently available for malaria. Prevention efforts include preventing mosquito bites and/or taking antimalarial drugs when traveling to a location where malaria exists.

- Visit your health care provider 4-6 weeks before travel to a country where malaria is present to get a prescription for antimalarial prophylaxis.
  - Drug resistant strains of malaria do exist, consult your health care provider
- Adults use 20-35% mosquito repellent containing DEET on exposed skin
  - Children should follow the labeled instructions for appropriate concentrations
- Wear long pants and long sleeved shirts
- Use insecticide-treated bed nets (ITNs)

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer to:

<http://www.cdc.gov/malaria/>

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