Indiana State Department of Health
Epidemiology Resource Center

Quick Facts

About…Malaria

What is malaria?

Malaria is a disease caused by a parasite that infects the blood. The parasites attack the red blood cells and cause a sudden fever. There are about 300 to 500 million human cases each year worldwide and over 1 million people die.

How is malaria spread?

Malaria is spread to humans by the bite of an infected *Anopheles* mosquito. Malaria can also be spread through blood transfusion, organ transplant, or the shared use of needles or syringes. Malaria may also be spread from a mother to her unborn infant before or during birth.

Who is at risk for malaria?

Anyone who travels to, or lives in, areas where malaria is spread are at risk. Malaria occurs in over 100 countries. The parasite is in large areas of Central and South America, Hispaniola (Haiti and Dominican Republic), Africa, the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Oceania.

How do I know if I have malaria?

The most common symptoms of malaria are fever, chills, sweats, headache, body aches, and being tired. Nausea and vomiting may also occur. Sometimes malaria may cause anemia and jaundice (yellow skin color) because of the loss of red blood cells. More serious symptoms can occur.

How is malaria treated?

Malaria can be cured with medicine from your doctor. However, there are some drug resistant strains.

How is malaria prevented?

There is no vaccine. To prevent the disease, you should avoid mosquito bites and take anti-malarial drugs when traveling to a location where malaria is common.

- Visit your doctor, or a travel clinic, 4-6 weeks before you go to a country with malaria.
- Adults should use mosquito repellent containing 20-35% DEET on skin
    - Follow the label instructions when using on children
- Wear long pants and long sleeved shirts to avoid mosquito bites
- 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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