



MALARIA

What is malaria?

Malaria is a serious and sometimes fatal mosquito borne disease caused by an *Anopheles* mosquito. About 2,000 cases of malaria are diagnosed in the United States each year. The vast majority of cases in the United States are in travelers and immigrants returning from countries where malaria transmission occurs, such as sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

Who gets malaria?

Anyone can get malaria. Most cases occur in people who live in countries with malaria transmission. People from countries with no malaria can become infected when they travel to countries with malaria or through a blood transfusion (although this is rare). Also, an infected mother can transmit malaria to her infant before or during delivery.

How is malaria spread?

People get malaria by being bitten by an infective female *Anopheles* mosquito. Only *Anopheles* mosquitoes can transmit malaria and they must have been infected through a previous blood meal taken from an infected person. Because the malaria parasite is found in red blood cells of an infected person, malaria can also be transmitted through a blood transfusion, an organ transplant, or when needles or syringes contaminated with blood are shared and used. Malaria may also be transmitted from a mother to her infant before or during delivery, called congenital malaria.

What are the symptoms of malaria?

Symptoms of malaria are fever and flu-like illness, including shaking, chills, headache, muscle aches, and tiredness. Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea may also occur. Malaria may cause anemia and jaundice (yellow coloring of the skin and eyes) because of the loss of red blood cells. If not promptly treated, the infection can become severe and may cause kidney failure, seizures, mental confusion, coma, and death.

How soon do symptoms appear?

For most people, symptoms begin 10 days to four weeks after infection, although a person may feel ill as early as seven days or as late as one year later.

Should an infected person be excluded from work or school?

Exclusion from work or school is not necessary. Malaria is not spread from person to person like a cold or the flu, and it cannot be sexually transmitted. Malaria cannot be transmitted from casual contact with malaria-infected people, such as sitting next to someone who has malaria.

Office of Infectious Disease Epidemiology
24/7 Emergency Contact Number: 1-888-295-5156

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Frequently Asked Questions

What is the treatment for malaria?

Malaria can be cured with prescription drugs. The type of drugs and length of treatment depend on the type of malaria, where the person was infected, their age, whether they are pregnant, and how sick they are at the start of treatment.

What can a person or community do to prevent the spread of malaria?

Many effective antimalarial drugs are available. A health care provider will determine treatment based on travel plans, medical history, age, drug allergies, pregnancy status, and other factors.

To prevent malaria, follow these important measures:

- Take antimalarial medication to kill the parasites and prevent becoming ill.
- Prevent mosquito bites, especially at night, by sleeping under insecticide-treated bed nets, using insect repellent, and wearing long-sleeved clothing if outdoors at night.

Attempts at producing an effective malaria vaccine and vaccine clinical trials are ongoing.

Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- *Anopheles* mosquito biology, <https://www.cdc.gov/malaria/about/biology/#tabs-1-5>
- Symptoms of Malaria, <https://www.cdc.gov/malaria/about/disease.html#uncomplicated>
- Choosing a Drug to Prevent Malaria, <https://www.cdc.gov/malaria/travelers/drugs.html>