



1. What is malaria?

Malaria is caused by a small parasite (germ) and is spread to humans by mosquitoes. Malaria is found in tropical countries, where the weather is hot and humid, such as certain parts of Africa, Mexico, South America and South Asia. About 1,300 cases of malaria are diagnosed in the United States each year. Nearly all of these cases are due to traveling to countries where malaria is found.

2. Who can get malaria?

Although anyone can get malaria, most cases happen to people living in or visiting countries that have malaria.

3. How is malaria spread?

When a mosquito bites a person infected with malaria, the mosquito becomes infected and can spread the disease to the next human it bites. A mother infected with malaria can also pass the disease on to her infant before or during delivery. Malaria can also be spread through blood transfusions, organ transplants and shared needles (syringes), especially among IV drug users.

4. How do you know if you have malaria?

Common symptoms of malaria include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Feeling tired
- Diarrhea
- Nausea

In some severe cases, if not treated right away, malaria may cause:

- Kidney failure
- Mental confusion
- Coma
- Death

5. How is malaria treated?

It is best to treat malaria in its earliest stages, before it becomes serious and life threatening. Different prescription drugs can cure malaria. The type of drugs and length of treatment is based on:

- The type of malaria you have
- Your age
- Where you were infected
- Whether you are pregnant
- How sick you are at the start of your treatment

If you have symptoms of malaria and are presently in, or have recently visited an area with malaria, tell your doctor right away so that you can be tested and treated in time.

6. Should infected people be restricted or excluded from work?

Malaria cannot be spread from person to person. You cannot get malaria from everyday contact with people who have malaria, such as sitting next to someone who has the disease. A person being treated for malaria should not be restricted or excluded from work.

7. What can be done to prevent the spread of malaria?

If you are traveling to an area that has malaria, you should check with your doctor to find out what drugs you should take 4-6 weeks before travel. Pregnant women should avoid traveling to places where there is malaria. If you travel or live in an area that has malaria, you should try to follow these tips:

- Keep mosquitoes from biting you, especially at night;
- Use DEET- based insect repellent on your body;
- Spray insect repellent on your walls at home to kill mosquitoes that come inside;
- Sleep under bed nets, treated with insect repellent;
- If outdoors at night, use insect repellent and wear long-sleeved clothing.

People who had malaria cannot donate blood for 3 years after their last symptoms. People who use needles (including diabetics) should not share them with others.

8. What other information do I need to know about malaria?

If you are traveling to an area with malaria, please visit www.cdc.gov/malaria .

Sources

1. *Malaria*. L.A. County Department of Public Health <http://www.lapublichealth.org/acd> .
2. *Malaria*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) <http://www.cdc.gov/malaria> .

For additional resources, please dial the Information Line 211 or visit the L.A. County Department of Public Health website <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov> .