



1. What is malaria?

Malaria is caused by a small parasite (worm) and is spread to humans by mosquito bites. 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. Each year, about 1,300 cases of malaria are diagnosed in the United States. Nearly all of these cases are from people traveling to countries where malaria is common. Although malaria can be a deadly disease, illness and death from malaria can usually be prevented.

2. How do you get malaria?

- When a mosquito bites a person infected with malaria, the mosquito becomes infected and can spread the disease to the next human it bites.
- Malaria is not contagious except in the case of an infected pregnant woman. She can give malaria to her infant before or during delivery.
- Malaria can also be spread through blood transfusions, organ transplants and shared needles, especially among drug users.

3. How do you know if you have malaria?

Common symptoms of malaria may include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Feeling tired
- Diarrhea
- Nausea
- Weight Loss
- Anemia
- Jaundice– yellow coloring of the skin and eyes

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

- Kidney failure
- Mental confusion
- Seizures
- Coma
- Death

4. 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
- Where you were infected
- How sick you are at the start of your treatment
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Whether you are pregnant

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

5. How can malaria be prevented?

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.
- Check with your doctor to find out what medication you should take 4-6 weeks before you travel.
- Pregnant women should avoid traveling to places where there is malaria.
- Please visit www.cdc.gov/malaria for more information.

Sources

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

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