

Malaria General Information

What is malaria?

Malaria is a serious, sometimes fatal, disease caused by a parasite. There are four kinds of malaria that can infect humans.

Who can get malaria?

Travelers to over 100 countries and territories may get malaria if bitten by a malaria-infected mosquito. More than 40% of the people in the world are at risk. Large areas of Central and South America, Hispaniola (Haiti and the Dominican Republic), Africa, the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Oceania are considered malaria-risk areas (an area of the world that has malaria).

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of malaria may include:

- fever
- chills
- headache
- muscle aches
- tiredness
- nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea may also occur
- kidney failure, seizures, mental confusion, coma

What is the treatment?

Malaria can be treated with prescription drugs. The type of drugs and length of treatment will vary depending on the type of malaria and other factors.

How can you prevent malaria?

- Visit your healthcare provider or travel clinic 4-6 weeks before foreign travel for advice on required anti-malarial drugs and mosquito protection.
- Take your anti-malarial drug exactly on schedule without missing doses.
- Prevent mosquito and other insect bites. Use DEET insect repellent on exposed skin. Spray for flying insects where you sleep. Use 10% or less concentration of DEET for children.
- Wear light-colored long pants and long-sleeved shirts, especially from dusk to dawn. This is the time when mosquitoes that spread malaria bite.
- Sleep under a mosquito bed net that has been impregnated with permethrin insecticide if you are not living in screened or air-conditioned housing.
- Avoid wearing scented products.