

# Malaria Fact Sheet

**Malaria is a disease caused by a family of parasites called *Plasmodium***

**Malaria is transmitted by certain types of mosquitoes**

The female *Anopheles* mosquito gets the parasite when it bites a person who is infected with the malaria parasite. The mosquito then spreads malaria when biting other people. Malaria occurs primarily in tropical and subtropical parts of the world such as Central and South America, Southeast Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean, and the South Pacific Islands. *Anopheles* mosquitoes bite during nighttime hours, from dusk to dawn.

**Symptoms usually appear 7 to 30 days after an infective bite and include:**

- Fever
- Chills
- Sweats
- Headache
- Breathing problems
- Tiredness
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Cough

Sometimes malaria causes fluid in the lungs, liver and kidney failure, swelling of the brain, coma, and even death can happen. Symptoms can appear months after an infected bite with some types of malaria. Also, some types of malaria can recur for years if not treated appropriately.

**Malaria is usually associated with travel outside the U.S.**

Most of the malaria seen in the United States is "imported" by travelers to or immigrants from countries where malaria is common. Rarely, malaria can also be transmitted from an infected mother to her baby and by blood transfusions from an infected donor. Very rarely, malaria has been spread in the U.S. by infected mosquitoes that arrive on international airplanes or by mosquitoes here that have bitten an infected person.

**A blood test and treatment are available for malaria**

The parasite can be seen in blood viewed under a microscope. Malaria can be very dangerous and even fatal if it is not treated. Early treatment reduces the chances of complications. See your doctor right away if you think you may have malaria. Make sure you inform your doctor of any recent travel and any medications you took while travelling.

**You can prevent malaria when travelling to areas where malaria is common**

- Use insect repellent containing DEET on exposed skin.
- Wear long clothing from dusk to dawn.
- Stay in well-screened areas and sleep under mosquito netting.
- Check with your doctor and local or state health department for current recommendations on prescription medications to prevent malaria, or call the CDC's Malaria Hotline at (404) 332-4555.