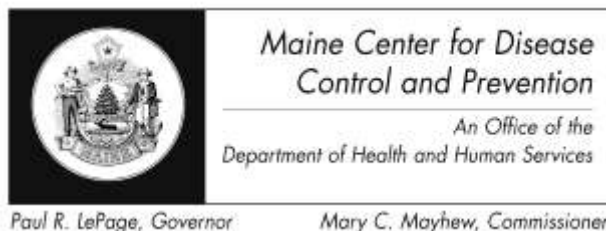


# Malaria

## Fact Sheet



### What is malaria?

Malaria is a serious and sometimes fatal disease caused by a parasite. Although malaria can be a fatal disease, illness from malaria is largely preventable and treatable.

### What are the signs and symptoms of malaria?

Symptoms of malaria include fever and flu-like illness, including shaking chills, headache, muscle aches, and tiredness. Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea may also occur. Malaria may cause anemia (low red blood cell count) and jaundice (yellow coloring of the skin and eyes). Infection with malaria may cause kidney failure, seizures, mental confusion, coma, and death.

### How is malaria spread?

Usually, people get malaria by being bitten by an infected mosquito. Only *Anopheles* mosquitoes can transmit malaria and they must have been infected through a previous blood meal taken on an infected person.

Malaria is not transmitted from person to person like a cold or the flu. You cannot get malaria from casual contact with malaria-infected people. Malaria in pregnant women may be very severe for the mother and unborn child.

### How soon will a person feel sick after being bitten by an infected mosquito?

For most people, symptoms begin 10 days to 4 weeks after infection. Sometimes a person may feel ill as early as 7 days or as late as 1 year later.

### How do I know if I have malaria?

A healthcare provider will look at a sample of your blood under a microscope to look for the malaria parasites. Any traveler who becomes ill with a fever or flu-like illness while traveling and up to 1 year after returning home should immediately seek medical care. Tell your health care provider if you traveled to a malaria-risk area.

### What is the treatment for malaria?

Malaria can be treated with prescription drugs. The type of drugs and length of treatment depend on the kind of malaria you have, where you

traveled and were infected, your age, whether you are pregnant, and severity of illness.

### Where does malaria occur?

Malaria is typically found in warmer regions of the world, in tropical and subtropical countries. About half of the world's population is at risk. Malaria is uncommon in the United States.

### I will be traveling outside of the United States. What should I do to avoid getting malaria?

Travelers leaving the United States should:

- Visit your health care provider 4-6 weeks before foreign travel for a prescription for an antimalarial drug, if needed as well as any necessary vaccinations.
- Check travel specific information at <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list.aspx>
- Take your antimalarial drug exactly on schedule without missing doses.
- Wear insect repellent to prevent mosquito and other insect bites. Your insect repellent should contain DEET as its active ingredient. Wear insect repellent if outdoors between dusk and dawn when the mosquito that transmits malaria is biting.
- Wear long pants and long-sleeved clothing.
- Sleep under a mosquito bed net (preferably one that has been treated with insecticide) if you are not living in screened or air-conditioned housing.

### Where can I get more information?

For more information contact your healthcare provider or local health center. You can also contact the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention by calling 1-800-821-5821. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website - <http://www.cdc.gov> - is another excellent source of health information.