



MALARIA

What is malaria?

Malaria is a zoonotic disease (diseases spread from animals to people) caused by a blood parasite (*Plasmodium* species). Malaria is common in tropical or subtropical areas of Asia, Africa, Central and South America. In Canada, malaria is found in persons who have travelled to areas of the world where this disease is present.

What are the symptoms?

The length of time between the infected mosquito bite and the development of symptoms depends on the type of *Plasmodium* species involved, and can range from seven to 30 days. Symptoms include fever, chills, sweats, and headache, and in some instances, progress to serious illness including jaundice, blood coagulation defects, shock, kidney or liver failure, central nervous disorders and coma.

How is malaria spread?

Malaria is usually transmitted to a person by the bite of an infected female mosquito. A mosquito becomes infected by biting a person with malaria. Malaria may also be transmitted by transfusion of blood from infected persons or by the use of contaminated needles or syringes. Congenital malaria (from infected mother to fetus during pregnancy) in newborns has been reported.

How is malaria diagnosed?

Malaria is diagnosed by symptoms, history of exposure and laboratory testing.

Who is at risk of malaria infections?

Persons living or travelling in areas of the world where malaria is present may become infected.

How can malaria be prevented?

Before you travel, seek advice from your family doctor at least one month before your departure.

Take anti-malarial medication for the entire time while in a malaria risk area and for four weeks afterward.

Prevent mosquito bites:

- use an insect repellent containing DEET;
- wear light-coloured clothing and long sleeves, pants and socks;
- sleep in places with screened windows; and use mosquito netting containing insect repellent and tuck mosquito netting under mattress before night fall.

How is malaria treated?

Medications can be used to treat malaria.

What is the Public Health response?

Health care providers and laboratories must notify cases of malaria to Public Health. Public Health staff may interview the health care provider and patient (or caregivers) to find out how the infection occurred, identify other people at risk of infection, implement control measures and provide other advice.

Further Information

For additional information, contact your health-care provider, local [Public Health office](#), or Telecare 811.

Useful websites:

Public Health Agency of Canada
www.phac-aspc.gc.ca