

### What is Malaria?

Malaria is a disease caused by *Plasmodium protozoa* parasites. There are four species of the protozoan parasite - *P.falciparum*, *P.vivax*, *P.ovale*, and *P.malariae*. Malaria caused by *P.falciparum* is the most serious as it results in severe and fatal infection. The parasite is transmitted by the bite of an infected female *Anopheles* mosquito, which usually feeds between dusk and dawn. This type of mosquito is common in most areas of sub-Saharan Africa, large areas of the Middle East, Southern Asia, Haiti, Central and South America, and in certain parts of Mexico, North Africa, and the Dominican Republic.

The most common symptoms of malaria include fever, chills, muscle aches and pains and headache. It may resemble the flu and may be mild at first. Persons who develop an unexplained fever within 3 months after leaving a country where malaria is present should see a doctor. Prompt treatment of malaria is essential.

### How can I protect myself from malaria?

Personal measures are extremely important and can greatly reduce the risk of malaria. They include:

- Stay indoors between dusk and dawn.
- If you are outdoors at night, wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Avoid aftershaves and perfumes, etc.
- Use insect repellent containing at least 20-35 % DEET (Muskol, Deep Woods Off).
- Sleep under an insect net at night.
- Keep your feet clean, especially between your toes.

Personal measures are extremely important in reducing your risk of malaria, but taking antimalarial medication is the best form of prevention. This will be recommended for all travellers to risk areas. You can access this medication through the Health Unit Travel Clinic.

### Other Questions?

Talk to your health care provider or call our Communicable Disease Program at 613-966-5500 x349. Toll Free 1-800-267-2803 | TTY Dial 711 (1-800-267-6511) | [www.hpepublichealth.ca](http://www.hpepublichealth.ca)

### Reference

- Heymann, D. L., (2008). Control of Communicable Diseases Manual. (19th Ed.). Washington, DC: American Public Health Association.

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