

# Malaria Matters

*This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.*

Malaria is a serious disease that's caused by a parasite that is spread by a certain type of mosquito which feeds on humans. People who get malaria are typically very sick. If it's not treated promptly, malaria can lead to death. However, illness and death from malaria can usually be prevented.

Malaria is found mostly in poor, tropical, and subtropical countries. It occurs in over 100 countries and territories, and more than a third of the world's population is at risk. Large areas of Central and South America, Hispaniola, Africa, South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Oceania are considered malaria-risk areas.

Malaria was eliminated from the United States by the early 1950s, but about 1,400 cases of malaria are diagnosed in the U.S. each year. Most of these cases occur in travelers and immigrants returning from malaria-risk areas. However, malaria has *not* been eliminated from many places in the world, and the World Health Organization estimates that 300-500 million cases of malaria occur each year and more than 1 million people die of malaria, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Most deaths occur in young children.

The costs of preventing and treating malaria, the missed days of work by those who are sick or who need to take care of family members who are sick, the missed days of school, the large numbers of illnesses and deaths---all create a huge drain on many national economies. Since many countries with malaria are already among the poorest nations, the disease contributes to a vicious cycle of disease and poverty.

*Anyone* can get malaria, however, it isn't contagious. It can't spread from person-to-person like a cold or the flu, and it can't be sexually transmitted. You can't get malaria from casual contact with malaria-infected people, such as sitting next to someone who has malaria.

People who have little or no immunity to malaria, such as young children and pregnant women who live in malaria-risk areas or travelers coming from areas with no malaria, are more likely to become very sick and die.

To prevent illness and death from malaria in malaria-risk areas, four strategies are recommended: using insecticide-treated bed nets, an effective antimalarial drug to treat malaria illness, preventive treatment for pregnant women, and spraying the inside walls of homes with an insecticide.

Anyone who travels to a malaria-risk country should take precautions. If you're planning travel outside of the United States, check with your health care provider or a travel clinic about whether you need to take precautions against malaria, as well as other diseases. 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 professional medical care.

Malaria can be cured with effective drugs. The type of drugs and length of treatment depend on the type of malaria, where the person was infected, their age, whether they are pregnant, and how sick they are at the start of treatment. If the right drugs are used, people who have malaria can be cured and all the malaria parasites can be cleared from their body.

The CDC is involved in activities in the U.S. and internationally to help stop malaria. In recent years, many partners, including The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria; the World Bank; Roll Back Malaria; UNICEF; and the President's Malaria Initiative, have stepped up efforts and joined together to increase the use of lifesaving interventions, especially in Africa. CDC also conducts cutting-edge research to make sure that effective malaria control tools will continue to be available to fight malaria.

For more information on malaria or CDC's involvement in malaria, please visit [www.cdc.gov/malaria](http://www.cdc.gov/malaria).

*For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.*