

### What is malaria?

Malaria is a disease caused by a parasite that is transmitted from person to person by the bite of an infected *Anopheles* mosquito.

### How is malaria spread?

Malaria is spread by mosquito bites. Cases of malaria that occur in the United States are nearly always among people who have traveled to places where malaria is common. An infected mother can transmit malaria to her infant before or during delivery.

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

The symptoms of malaria include fever, chills, headache, and muscle aches. Less common symptoms are nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. The early stages of malaria may look like influenza (flu).

### How long after infection do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually begin 10 days to 4 weeks after being bitten by an infected mosquito, although symptoms can appear anywhere from 7 days to 1 year after the initial bite. In rare cases, people won't feel sick for up to 4 years after being bitten.

### Who is most at risk?

While anyone can get malaria, people living in tropical and subtropical areas where *Anopheles* mosquitos live are more likely to become infected. Transmission occurs in

large areas of Central and South America, parts of the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and the South Pacific. Travelers to these areas are also at risk.

### What type of health problems are caused by malaria?

If not properly treated, malaria can become severe and may cause kidney failure, seizures, mental confusion, coma, and death. Children and pregnant women are more likely to experience these complications if they are not properly treated.

### How is malaria diagnosed?

A malaria test is done by taking a blood sample and examining it under a microscope to see if it contains malaria parasites.

### How is malaria treated?

Malaria can be treated with specific antimalarial 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. Malaria should be treated early, before it becomes serious and life-threatening.

### How can malaria be prevented?

There is almost no risk of getting malaria in the United States. Travelers to areas where malaria is present can prevent malaria by using antimalarial drugs, mosquito netting, and insect repellents containing DEET. In addition to using an insect repellent, a

permethrin-containing product may be applied to bed nets and clothing for additional protection against mosquitos. If you are traveling to an area where malaria is present, talk to your healthcare provider or travel clinic consultant about the best way to prevent malaria infection.

### Where can I get more information?

- Your personal healthcare provider
- Utah Department of Health, Bureau of Epidemiology, 801-538-6191
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Utah Travel Clinics

