

Malaria Information Sheet

What is malaria?

Malaria is a disease caused by a parasite that is spread through the bite of an infected mosquito. Malaria can cause serious and sometimes deadly illness in humans. It is common in Africa, South Asia, and Central and South America. To date, Maricopa County has only identified cases of malaria that individuals caught in other places.

How can you catch malaria?

Mosquitoes become infected after biting a person who has the malaria parasite in their blood. After 2 to 3 weeks, the infected mosquito can then spread the parasite when biting another person. Malaria is not spread directly from person to person. However, it can be spread through blood transfusion, organ transplant, shared needled use, or during pregnancy or delivery.

What are the symptoms of malaria?

Symptoms usually appear 7 to 30 days after a bite from an infected mosquito. Symptoms can last up to 1 month or even longer. Symptoms can include:

- Fever
- Shaking chills
- Sweating
- Headache
- Nausea and vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Muscle aches
- Tiredness and weakness

If untreated, some types of malaria can rapidly lead to jaundice (yellowing of skin and eyes), kidney failure, seizures, mental confusion, coma and even death.

How can you be treated for malaria?

The treatment of malaria depends on multiple things, such as type of malaria, severity of symptoms, country of travel, and others. Your doctor will prescribe the most effective drugs based on these factors. Treatment should begin immediately following diagnosis.

How can you prevent malaria?

- **The best way to prevent malaria is to ask your doctor about prevention medicines before you travel.**
- To prevent mosquito bites when travelling to areas affected by malaria:
 - Use an insect repellent containing DEET or other effective ingredient on exposed skin and on clothing. If using sunscreen, it should be applied before insect repellent.
 - Reapply insect repellent as directed on the label.
 - Wear long sleeves and pants when possible.
 - Use screens on windows and doors or air conditioning to keep mosquitoes out.