

SAMHS INFO BULLETIN



Compiled by Corporate Communication

WORLD MALARIA DAY 25 APRIL

What is Malaria?

Malaria is a disease caused by a parasite that can infect people's red blood cells. The parasite is spread to people by the bites of infected mosquitoes.

Most malaria infections cause flu-like symptoms (such as high fever, chills, muscle pain, and diarrhea) that come and go in cycles. A severe form of malaria can cause serious heart, lung, kidney, and brain problems, or death.

How does a human become infected with Malaria?

The female *Anopheles* mosquito transmits the parasite to a human when it takes a blood meal - it bites the human in order to feed on blood.

Only the female *Anopheles* mosquito can transmit malaria, and it must have been infected through a previous blood meal taken from an infected human.

When the mosquito bites an infected person a minute quantity of the malaria (plasmodium) parasite in the blood is taken.

Approximately one week later that same infected mosquito takes its next blood meal. The plasmodium parasites mix with the mosquito's saliva and are injected into the host (human being).

Human-to-human transmission of Malaria

As the parasite exists in human red blood cells, malaria can be passed on from one person to the next through organ transplant, shared use of needles/syringes, and blood transfusion. An infected mother may also pass malaria on to her baby during delivery (birth) - this is called 'congenital malaria'.

People cannot "catch" malaria from others just by being near them. You can sit next to an infected person quite safely, with no risk of infection, even if they cough or sneeze

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What are the symptoms of Malaria?

In regions where Malaria is common, local people usually have some level of immunity, which means that many infected people may have no symptoms at all, or very few.

Severity of Malaria symptoms depends on:

1. The type of parasite.
2. The individual's level of immunity.
3. Whether the person still has his/her spleen

Treatment for Malaria

Medicine can prevent malaria and is needed to treat the disease. Several things influence the choice of medicine, including:

- Whether the medicine is being used to prevent or to treat malaria.
- Your condition (such as your age or whether you are pregnant).
- How sick you are from malaria.
- Geographic location where you were exposed to malaria.
- Whether the malaria parasite may be resistant to certain medicines.
- Side effects of the medicine.

Source: International Medical Corps

Approved by: DMed