

Malaria

Frequently Asked Questions



What is malaria?

Malaria can be a serious disease caused by a small parasite that affects red blood cells. The parasite is carried by a certain type of mosquito and is transmitted to a human host when bitten by a mosquito carrying the parasite.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of malaria can include:

- Headache
- Diarrhea
- Muscle Aches
- Tiredness
- Chills
- Fever
- Nausea
- Vomiting

How does it spread?

Malaria is carried by infected humans who have the parasite in their bloodstream. It is spread when a mosquito bites the infected person and takes their blood. The mosquito carries the parasite and when it bites another human, the parasite is injected into this next human.

Who is at risk of developing malaria?

Because mosquitoes will bite any human, anyone is potentially at risk. However, malaria is mostly seen in tropical climates, in places outside of the United States. In fact, almost all cases in the United States are acquired from travel not in the United States.

How is it diagnosed and treated?

Malaria is diagnosed through a blood test and can be treated with drugs prescribed by your health-care provider.

What should I do if I think I have it?

If you think you have malaria, you should contact your doctor immediately and tell him or her if you have been to an area that has malaria, so that a blood test can be done.

How is it prevented?

- If you are traveling to a high-risk malaria area there are drugs that you can take before the trip to prevent sickness.
- Try to avoid the bites of mosquitoes by wearing long sleeves and long pants, and using insect repellent.
- Use mosquito netting in tropical places with lots of mosquitoes.

For more information contact your doctor, refer to <http://www.phila.gov/Health/> or contact the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, Division of Disease Control at 215-685-6740.

