

# IDRS Infectious Disease Reporting System

Disease Reporting 24 Hours a Day

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health

## MALARIA

Malaria is a mosquito-borne disease caused by a blood parasite called *Plasmodium*. The disease is transmitted to people by the *Anopheles* mosquito. Although malaria can be a fatal disease, it is often preventable.

### Symptoms

Symptoms usually develop 12-30 days after a mosquito bite, and may include:

- Fever and shaking chills—fever tends to cycle up and down every 1-3 days
- Headache, muscle aches, tiredness
- Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea
- Paleness or yellowish skin and eyes

### Transmission

- Humans get malaria from the bite of a malaria-infected mosquito. Only *Anopheles* mosquitoes carry malaria. These mosquitoes tend to feed at night and are more common in tropical areas.
- Although *Anopheles* mosquitoes do live in Ohio, there has not been case of malaria acquired in Ohio since 1975. Nearly all cases of malaria in Ohio are acquired during travel to foreign countries.
- People with malaria are not contagious to others. However, people who do not get treated for malaria could carry the parasite in their blood for one to three years. If a mosquito bites someone carrying malaria, it can transmit the infection to people it bites afterwards.
- Malaria may also be transmitted when infected people donate blood or by the use of contaminated needles or syringes.

### Treatment

- Malaria is diagnosed based on symptoms, followed by laboratory confirmation. A laboratory can examine the patient's blood under a microscope for the presence of the malaria parasite.
- Complications of malaria can include kidney failure, seizures, confusion, unconsciousness, and death.
- If you get a fever during or after travel to a malaria risk area, tell your health care provider right away.
- Malaria can be treated with antibiotics. However, treatment may be ineffective if the parasite is resistant to the drug used or if the patient does not finish all the medicine. Without effective treatment, the disease may continue or relapse for months or years.

### Prevention

- Since malaria is not native to the United States, exposure of Americans occurs most frequently during travel. Preventive medications are available for those traveling to a known malarial area. Before travel to another country, call the CDC's hotline for detailed recommendations: 1-877-FYI-TRIP
- Prevent mosquito bites, especially when traveling to areas where malaria is common.
  - Use mosquito repellents on skin and clothing, and sleep under bed nets.
  - Avoid outdoor activities during the peak mosquito biting times of dawn, dusk and evening.
  - If weather permits, wear long pants, long sleeves, and/or socks.
  - Stay in screened or air conditioned areas during peak mosquito biting times.
- Eliminate mosquito breeding sites by covering or discarding items that collect water outdoors (for example, plastic containers, buckets, or used tires). Empty containers of standing water weekly.

All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.



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