

## FACT SHEET

# MALARIA

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### **What is Malaria?**

Malaria is a parasite that spreads by infecting one after another two types of hosts: humans and female *Anopheles* mosquitoes. In humans, the parasites grow and multiply first in the liver cells and then in the red cells of the blood. In the blood, successive broods of parasites grow inside the red cells and destroy them, releasing daughter parasites ("merozoites") that continue the cycle by invading other red cells.

### **Who is at risk for Malaria?**

Your greatest risk will happen when you travel outside the United States to places where there is malaria, for example South America, Southeast Asia, or sub-Saharan Africa. However, even if you live in the United States, under very rare circumstances you could get malaria.

### **How do you get Malaria?**

Usually, people get malaria by being bitten by a female mosquito. Only mosquitoes infected with malaria parasites (from a previous blood meal taken on an infected person) can transmit malaria. Very rarely, malaria can also be transmitted through blood transfusion, organ transplant, or shared use of contaminated needles or syringes. Malaria may also be transmitted from a mother to her fetus before or during delivery ("congenital" malaria).

### **Can Malaria be spread from person-to-person?**

Malaria is not spread from person to person like a cold or the flu. You cannot get malaria from casual contact with malaria-infected people.

### **What are the symptoms of Malaria?**

The classical (but rarely observed) malaria attack lasts 6 - 10 hours. It consists of: a cold stage (sensation of cold, shivering), a hot stage (fever, headaches, vomiting; seizures in young children), and finally a sweating stage (sweats, return to normal temperature, tiredness).

More commonly, the patient has the following symptoms: fever, chills, sweats, headaches, nausea and vomiting, body aches, and general malaise.

### **How soon will symptoms appear?**

The incubation period in most cases is from 7 - 30 (9-40) days.

### **How can Malaria be prevented?**

In areas where malaria is common, prevent infected mosquitoes from biting you and take antimalarial drugs. Destroy the mosquitoes' breeding sites so that the mosquitoes cannot reproduce, and apply permethrin insecticides to the walls inside the home to kill adult mosquitoes. Sleep inside bed nets, which will be even more effective if they have been treated with insecticides. Sleep in houses that are screened or air-conditioned, and avoid exposure to mosquitoes between dusk and dawn. If outdoors, apply insect repellants containing DEET to exposed skin and long-sleeved clothing or clothing treated with permethrin.