

Malaria

What is it?

- Malaria is caused by a family of parasites (Plasmodium) that grow in mosquitos and in human blood. Most often we get malaria from a mosquito bite.
- There are 4 types of this parasite that may cause illness and death.
- Symptoms usually appear about 12 to 14 days after being exposed and may include:
 - stomach pain
 - diarrhea
 - nausea and vomiting
 - high fevers
 - chills and sweats
 - headache
 - dizziness
 - muscle aches
 - poor appetite
 - tiredness
 - low blood pressure
- Some malaria is more severe and can cause:
 - anemia (decrease in red blood cells)
 - extreme tiredness
 - delirium
 - unconsciousness
 - convulsions
 - coma
 - kidney failure
 - fluid on the lung
- Malaria is not found in Canadian mosquitos. However, 1 million Canadians travel to areas that have a high rate of malaria every year. This results in 350 to 1,000 infections a year in Canada.

How is it spread?

- The most common way malaria is spread is through a bite from an infected mosquito
- It can also spread from infected blood during a blood transfusion or from mother to child during pregnancy

Is there treatment for it?

- **Yes. If recognized early, malaria infection can be cured.**
- The medication chosen by your doctor depends on:
 - the type of malaria
 - the area you travelled to or visited when you contracted malaria
 - the severity of the illness
 - your medical history
 - if you are pregnant

What can be done to prevent the spread of it?

- If you are travelling to an area where malaria is common, you should take medicine to prevent it. Contact your family doctor or travel clinic.
- Where malaria is present make sure to:
 - stay away from fields, forests and swamps
 - use permethrin-treated mosquito netting when sleeping
 - wear light coloured clothing
 - wear long sleeves and pants
 - put on mosquito repellent containing DEET on exposed skin
 - apply sunscreen first, if needed, wait 20 minutes, and then apply DEET
 - try to stay indoors at night

For more information

World Health Organization

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs094/en/index.html>

**Stop the spread of germs and infection.
Clean your hands.**

