



Diseases Fact Sheet - Malaria

South Dakota Department of Health

Office of Disease Prevention Services - 605-773-3737 -(1-800-592-1861 in South Dakota only)

This material is provided for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for medical care. We are not able to answer personal medical questions. Please see your health care provider concerning appropriate care, treatment or other medical advice.

What is it?

Malaria is a mosquito-borne disease caused by *Plasmodium* blood parasites. The disease is transmitted to people by the *Anopheles* mosquito. This disease is a leading cause of debilitating illness, with up to 300 million cases and 1 million deaths each year from around the world.

Who gets malaria?

Any person living in or traveling to a country where malaria is prevalent is at risk for contracting the disease.

Where is malaria transmitted?

Malaria is currently transmitted in tropical or subtropical areas of Africa, some parts of Asia, and some parts of Central and South America, and Haiti and the Dominican Republic in the Caribbean.

How is malaria spread?

Malaria is spread by the bite of an infected *Anopheles* mosquito. With certain malaria species, dormant forms can be produced which may cause relapses of malaria months to years later. Malaria may also be transmitted by transfusion of blood from infected people or by the use of contaminated needles or syringes.

What are the symptoms of malaria?

Symptoms include fever, chills, sweats, and headache, and in some instances may progress to jaundice, blood coagulation defects, shock, kidney or liver failure, central nervous system disorders, and coma.

How soon do symptoms occur?

The time between the infective mosquito bite and the development of malaria symptoms can range from 9 to 30 days depending on the type of *Plasmodia* involved. One strain of *Plasmodium*, called *Plasmodium vivax*, may have a prolonged incubation period of 6 to 12



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months. When infection occurs by blood transfusion, the incubation period depends on the number of parasites transferred but is usually less than two months.

What is the treatment for malaria?

Due to the changing pattern of drug-resistant strains, current recommendations can be obtained from the CDC; please see www.cdc.gov/malaria/travelers/drugs.html.

What can be done to prevent the spread of malaria?

Since malaria is no longer transmitted within the United States, exposure to American citizens occurs most frequently during foreign travel to overseas tropical areas. It is very important to contact your physician to determine the proper preventive drug therapy while traveling. While in malaria zones use mosquito repellents and bed nets to prevent mosquito bites.

Related Sites:

- CDC malaria website: www.cdc.gov/malaria/