



Public Health  
England

NaTHNaC  
National Travel Health Network and Centre

# Malaria

Information for people travelling overseas



This leaflet contains information about malaria and how to protect yourself and your family when travelling to malaria-risk countries

Malaria is a serious illness that is common in many tropical countries. Symptoms can develop rapidly and it can kill you, but if you take the correct precautions you can greatly reduce your risk of catching it. The disease is spread by mosquitoes that bite at night (dusk to dawn).

You can protect yourself against malaria, and you must do so every time you visit a country with malaria. This is very important, even if you grew up or lived there and are now returning to visit your friends or family. No one has full immunity to malaria. Any partial protection you may have from being brought up in a malarious country is quickly lost when you live in countries with no malaria, so everyone needs to take precautions to avoid getting malaria.

Your family are at risk as well. Babies and children, especially those born outside the tropics, can get very sick with malaria very quickly. It is also particularly dangerous for pregnant women, who should avoid visits to malarious areas. Use the **ABCD** approach to protect yourself.

## **A** – be Aware of the risks

Malaria is common in many parts of Africa, Asia, the Indian subcontinent, South America and some areas in the Far and Middle East. The risk is particularly high in sub-Saharan Africa.

See your doctor, nurse or pharmacist providing travel health services or go to a travel clinic to check if there is malaria in the country you are visiting. They can give you malaria prevention advice. Seek their advice 6-8 weeks before your trip, if possible, but remember it is never too late to seek advice. Even last-minute travellers can get useful protection.

## **B** – use Bite prevention

- use an insect repellent containing DEET. Other effective repellents are picaridin (icaridin) and lemon eucalyptus. These are readily available in pharmacies or camping and travel shops. Remember to reapply insect repellent frequently and to follow the manufacturer's recommendations, particularly when applying repellents to young children

- cover up with trousers and long-sleeved clothes after sunset.
- treat clothing with insecticides
- use knockdown sprays or coils to kill any mosquitoes before you go to bed. These products are readily available in pharmacies or travel and camping shops
- sleep in a properly screened, air conditioned room or under a mosquito net that has been treated with insecticide

Homoeopathic or herbal remedies, electronic buzzers, garlic and vitamins do not protect against mosquito bites.

## **C** – take Chemoprophylaxis (malaria tablets)

Tablets to prevent malaria play a very important role in protecting you. There are a number of different types. Ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist providing travel health services which type of tablets you and your family need.

Make sure you understand how and when to take your tablets. You need to start taking them before you go, continue all the time you are away and also for a period of time when you return. Remember – it is vital that you finish the course of tablets when you get back to make sure you are properly protected. Homoeopathic or herbal remedies do not protect against malaria and must not be used in place of antimalarial tablets.

## **D** – seek early Diagnosis if you become unwell

Although modern prevention methods are highly effective and can greatly reduce your risk of dying from this dangerous disease, they do not give 100% protection.

If you or any of your family has a fever or flu-like illness after being in a country with malaria you must see your doctor urgently. Tell them where you have been and mention malaria. Remember you could still have malaria, even a year after a trip to a malaria-risk region.

For more information, see your doctor or nurse, or pharmacist providing travel health services. In addition, visit the websites [www.nathnac.org](http://www.nathnac.org), [www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk) and [www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk)

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339