

# Malaria

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## 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. Malaria is spread in tropical and subtropical areas of the world, where Anopheles mosquitoes can survive and multiply, and malaria parasites can finish their growth cycle in the mosquitoes. 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.

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## 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 visit:

World Health Organization

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

**Adherence to Infection Prevention and Control measures by staff and visitors is required to prevent spread of infection.**

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



This fact sheet provides basic general information only and is to be used as a quick guide, not as a complete resource on the subject. If you have any further questions, ask Infection Prevention & Control or your health care provider.