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## Malaria Disease Information Sheets

### *What is malaria?*

Malaria is a disease that is transmitted by the bite of a particular kind of mosquito. There are four main strains of malaria. The most serious of these is the **falciparum**. This form can be fatal. The other three forms, **vivax**, **ovale** and **malariae** are usually less serious, but still need to be prevented and treated promptly.

### *What does malaria do to your body?*

Once a malaria mosquito has bitten a traveler, parasites travel to the liver and can lay there dormant, or can start to rapidly multiply. Eventually the parasites multiply so much that the liver cells they have invaded bursts and releases them into the blood stream. Once in the blood stream they attack the red blood cells. By the time the parasites are in the blood stream the traveler may start to experience the symptoms of malaria, which includes high fever and chills.

Two of the strains of malaria, **Vivax** and **Ovale** do not produce the symptoms of malaria for some months, which is why it is important to have a blood test for malaria if you develop fevers months after travel.

### *Can you die from malaria?*

There are complications associated with malaria that may lead to coma and death. The average traveler should seek medical attention in the event of feeling unwell.

Full recovery can be expected from malaria in persons who seek medical attention in the early stages of malaria.

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

The symptoms of malaria can be varied. Usually the symptoms include high fever, chills, headache, feeling unwell, muscle aches and cramps.

### *Do I need to take any malaria tablets to prevent malaria?*

Depending on your travel destination, you may be required to take anti-malarial tablets. Travelers are advised, "The best cure is prevention."

The travelers of today have many different malaria drugs to choose from. They all have different actions and unfortunately, side effects. Some of the drugs are not effective in certain parts of the world, so it is imperative that travelers seek

the medical advice of a travel health expert, to ensure that the correct drugs are prescribed.

It is important to note that swapping and changing anti malarial drug is NOT recommended. Once a course of anti malarial drugs is started it should be taken until it is completed.

It is very dangerous for travelers to change over to a different brand of anti malarial tablets because their friend is taking that particular brand. In this case, not only do you risk having side effects from the combination of two different drugs, you may also risk getting malaria.

*How do I avoid mosquitos in general?*

To avoid mosquitos in general we would recommend the following:

1. The use of an insect repellent containing DEET, such as RID
2. Avoiding the outdoors between dawn and dusk
3. Wearing long, light colored, loose clothing, as dark colors attract mosquito's
4. Avoid wearing any strong perfume
5. If accommodation consists of backpacker or hostel or tent, the use of a mosquito net impregnated with permethrin.
6. Washing clothes in permethrin solution prior to travel.

*What are the types of Anti-malarial medication?*

There are 5 types of anti malarial medication that are stocked at Travel Clinic Matraville. It is important to note that **None of the anti malarial drugs are 100% effective in preventing malaria.**

1. Chloroquin

Chloroquin was once a very popular anti malarial drug. However, it has become resistant in some areas, therefore it is not as effective in providing full protection against strains of malaria.

It is taken weekly.

Take two tablets one week before travel to a malaria area. Take two tablets each week while in the malaria area. (It is preferable to take the tablets on the same day and at the same time). Continue taking two tablets each week after leaving the malaria area for 4 weeks.

Chloroquin comes in a bottle of 100 tablets. It is sold for \$15.00 (incl GST) per 100 tablets.

Advantage: The most cost effective of the anti malarial medications.

Disadvantage: Some strains of malaria have become resistant to the medication. For these areas of travel, travelers are advised to consult their travel health expert and select another medication.

## 2. Malarone.

Malarone is a relatively new anti malarial medication.

It is taken daily.

Start one day before travel to a malaria area. Take one tablet each day while in the malaria area (preferably at the same time.). Continue taking one tablet each day after leaving the malaria area for 7 days.

Malarone comes in packets of 12 tablets. It is sold for \$80.00 (incl GST) per packet.

Advantage: Travelers only take the medication for 7 days after leaving the malaria area.

Disadvantage: The medication is quite expensive for long stay travelers.

## 3. Doxycycline

Doxycycline has been used for malaria prophylaxis for some time. It is advised that you consult with your travel health professional prior to starting this drug; it does interact with other medications

It is taken daily.

Start two days before travel to a malaria area. Take one tablet each day while in the malaria area (preferably at the same time.) morning is usually a better time. Continue taking one tablet each day after leaving the malaria area for 4 weeks.

Doxycycline comes in packets of 21 tablets. It is sold for \$15.00 (incl GST) per packet.

Advantage: The medication is widely used by travelers and is relatively cost effective for long stay travelers.

Disadvantage: Children under the age of 8 cannot take the medication. Travelers MUST continue to take the medication for 4 weeks after leaving the malaria area.

## 4. Proguanil

Proguanil is taken daily.

Take two tablets (200mg) one day before travel to a malaria area. Take two tablets each day while in the malaria area (preferably at the same time).

Continue taking two tablets each day after leaving the malaria area for 4 weeks.

Proguanil comes in a bottle of 100 tablets. It is sold for \$45.00 (Incl GST).

Advantage: Is very cost effective for long stay travelers. It is one of the few malarial medications that are safe to be used by pregnant women.

Disadvantage: Is only effective in certain areas. Travelers MUST continue taking the medication for 4 weeks after leaving the malaria area.

#### 5. Lariam

Lariam has been used for malaria prophylaxis for some time. It is advised that you consult with your travel health professional prior to starting this drug; it does interact with other medications. Some travelers may not be able to take this drug due to current medical conditions.

It is taken weekly.

Take one tablet 1-2 weeks before travel to a malaria area. Take one tablet every week while you are in the malaria area. (It is preferable to take the tablet on the same day at the same time.). Continue taking one tablet each week after leaving the malaria area for 4 weeks.

Lariam comes in packets of 8 tablets. It is sold for \$56.00 (Incl GST) per packet.

Advantage: The medication is taken weekly. It is cost effective for travelers both short and long stay.

Disadvantage: Side effects can be a possible disadvantage. Prior to commencement of the medication, side effects must be discussed.

All of these medications are available on-line from our web site.

[www.vaccinations.com.au](http://www.vaccinations.com.au)