

Malaria: What You Need To Know

Malaria causes death in an estimated 1,5 to 2,7 million people every year. With around ninety malaria areas - nearly half of them in Sub-Saharan Africa - more than two hundred million people are exposed to the infection. The disease can cause spontaneous abortion in up to sixty percent of cases, and ten percent of expectant mothers die after contracting malaria.

Anopheles mosquitoes are found in low altitude areas in northern parts of South Africa and neighboring countries, as well as in South and Central American countries. The Amazon basin is known to be particularly virulent, and Malaria is widespread across South East Asia.



How Malaria Spreads

Malaria is spread by female anopheles mosquitoes that carry the parasite and transmit the disease through biting. Anopheles mosquitoes feed between dusk and dawn.

Symptoms of Malaria

Although malaria has a 14-day incubation period, the infection may manifest in as little as a week, or as much as long as two months.

People who present with flu-like symptoms, body pains, vomiting and diarrhoea after returning from a malaria region should seek immediate medical attention, even if they have taken malaria prophylaxis.

Malaria Prophylaxis: Are They Worth It?

Although there is no precautionary malaria prevention that is 100% effective, it is reckless to enter a malaria area without any precautions.

If possible, avoid traveling into malaria areas with children under the age of five, and be sure to take the necessary precautions, as malaria may be life threatening.

Antimalarial drugs are available through prescription only, and most older drugs that were available over-the-counter are no longer recommended.

Unlike the older prophylaxis, some of the newer antimalarial drugs do not have to be taken for extended periods. In some cases, you can take it a day before you enter a risk area, and continue taking it for only seven days after leaving. However, it is important to speak to an experienced travel doctor about the best options.

In addition to antimalarial drugs, it is important to take the necessary precautions to avoid bites:

- cover up, especially at sunset and sunrise
- apply a mosquito repellent

Speak to [Nelspruit Health & Travel General Practitioner](#) about the best anti-malaria prophylactics for your family's needs.