

Facts about MALARIA

A real threat to the health of Zambians



CDC/James Gathany

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Facts about Malaria:

- Malaria is a life-threatening disease caused by parasites that are passed on to people through the bites of infected mosquitoes.
- Pregnant women, children under 5, and the chronically ill are most vulnerable to malaria.
- Malaria is preventable and curable.
- Early treatment is critical and should be prescribed by a qualified health worker at a health facility.
- If not treated in good time, malaria can quickly progress into a severe illness and can lead to death.

How can I tell if I have malaria?

The only sure way to know if you have malaria is to get tested through a malaria blood slide test or a rapid diagnostic test (RDT).



Malaria testing

What are the signs and symptoms of malaria?

The first symptoms include fever, headache, chills or vomiting. These symptoms may be mild and difficult to recognize as malaria.

Common Signs and Symptoms

- Feeling cold or shivering
- High body temperatures
 - Sweating
 - Headaches
- Joint and body pains

Symptoms of Advanced Malaria

- Continuous vomiting
- Feeling weak and tired
- Convulsions or fits
- Difficulty breathing
- Unconsciousness
- For babies, inability to breastfeed

TREATMENT

Malaria Medicines in Zambia:



Coartem

This medicine is recommended for the treatment of simple or uncomplicated malaria.

Quinine

Recommended to treat severe or complicated malaria.

Fansidar

Only recommended for prevention of malaria during pregnancy and treatment of children weighing under 5 kg.

Important tips for malaria treatment:

- If you have taken any medicine, inform the health worker about it.
- Once you begin malaria treatment, you will feel better after the first day of treatment. However, always complete your malaria medicine or you will not get completely cured.
- Do not share the medicine with anyone, or keep it for future use.
- Malaria medicines should be taken with lots of food and water.
- If you vomit within an hour of taking your medicine, take another dose.

PREVENTION

The government has recommended the following methods to prevent malaria:

Insecticide treated nets (ITNs) - An ITN is a mosquito net treated with a chemical designed to repel and kill mosquitoes upon contact.

Indoor Residual Spraying (IRS) - IRS is the spraying of homes with insecticides to kill mosquitoes. After feeding on your blood, the mosquito likes to rest indoors. By applying a chemical on the walls, the mosquito picks up the chemical where it is resting and eventually dies.

Preventive medicine for pregnant women - When a pregnant woman gets malaria, it can often lead to serious health complications for the mother and her unborn baby. It is important for pregnant women to take preventive malaria medicine during their pregnancy. If pregnant and you suspect having malaria, get tested immediately.

Other useful ways to prevent malaria:

- Use mosquito repellent creams
- Wear clothes that cover the majority of your body at night
- Put screens on windows to prevent mosquitoes from entering your house.

How to Manage your Environment:

Managing the environment to reduce mosquito breeding sites is another malaria prevention method. You should:

- Cover ditches that may collect water and become potential breeding grounds for mosquitoes
- Minimize and/or cover stagnant water around homes
- Get rid of unwanted/unnecessary containers around your home that can collect water
- Ensure drainage pipes are not blocked so water does not build up

What You Can Do

1. Sleep under an Insecticide Treated Net (ITN) every night throughout the year.
2. If pregnant, go to antenatal clinics three times during pregnancy to receive malaria medicines.
3. If indoor residual spraying (IRS) is offered in your area, have your house sprayed every year.
4. If you are showing signs and symptoms of malaria, go to your health facility immediately for testing. If you have malaria, take all the malaria medicine even if you feel better.

