

21 Apr 2023

World Malaria Day 2023: Malaria reminder

Advice for travellers and health professionals about malaria

[Malaria](#) is a potentially serious parasitic infection transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito.

Most cases of malaria in the UK report travel to Africa, with the majority travelling to West Africa. Every year, malaria deaths are reported in the UK in travellers who visited risk countries. In 2021, three fatal malaria cases were reported in the UK [1].

Around the world, COVID-19 continues to have an impact on the provision of other health care services, including malaria surveillance and the delivery of malaria prevention measures [2, 3]. Travellers to malaria risk areas should be aware that there may continue to be disruptions to malaria prevention, diagnosis and treatment. Furthermore, surveillance, control and elimination programmes may not be as robust as they have been in previous years.

However, progress has been made in some areas, such as Azerbaijan and Tajikistan being declared malaria-free [4] and the launch of the first malaria vaccine for use in endemic areas in Ghana, Kenya and Malawi [5].

In the run up to [World Malaria Day, on 25th April 2023](#), travellers are reminded to consider the risk of malaria at a destination; use preventive measures where indicated and be vigilant for the signs of malaria.

Advice for travellers

Before you travel

Pre-travel advice should be sought, ideally 4-6 weeks prior to travel; although last-minute advice is still useful if time is short.

Individual country-specific malaria risk and prevention advice is available in the [Country Information pages](#) and [Outbreak Surveillance database](#).

While you are away

If you are visiting a malaria risk area, ensure that you follow all the important steps for malaria prevention:

- A** - Awareness of the malaria risk at your chosen destination
- B** - Bite prevention
- C** - Chemoprophylaxis (use of appropriate malaria prevention tablets*)
- D** - Diagnosis, if you develop [symptoms of malaria](#) you should seek prompt medical advice without delay

***If taken as prescribed, modern prevention methods are highly effective and can greatly reduce your risk of dying. However, they do not give 100% protection; you should still avoid bites and seek prompt advice if you develop symptoms.**

Further [advice for travellers about mosquito bite avoidance](#) is available.

When you return

Suspected malaria is a medical emergency. If you or any of your family has a [fever or flu-like illness](#) after being in a country with malaria, you must seek immediate medical attention that day. Tell them where you have travelled to, mention malaria and ask to be tested for it. Remember you could still have malaria even up to a year after a trip to a malaria-risk region [6].

Advice for health professionals

Malaria should be suspected in anyone with a fever or a history of fever returning from or having previously visited a malaria endemic area, regardless of whether they have taken prophylaxis.

The minimum incubation period for naturally acquired infection is six days. Most patients with *Plasmodium falciparum* infection present in the first month or months after exposure; almost all present within six months of exposure. Vivax or ovale infections commonly present later than six months after exposure and presentation may be delayed for years [7].

If a traveller's itinerary included travel to a malaria endemic area, they must have a blood test result for malaria on the same day. Information for health professionals about blood tests and how to request them in the UK is available from the UK Health Security Agency [Malaria prevention guidelines for travellers from the UK](#) (page 52).

All malaria-positives, acquired in any geographical area, should be confirmed by the [Malaria Reference Laboratory](#).

Resources

- [Country Information](#)
- [Outbreak Surveillance](#)
- [UK Health Security Agency ACMP: Malaria prevention guidelines for travellers from the UK 2022](#)
- [Malaria factsheet](#)
- [Visiting friends and relatives abroad: advice for travellers](#)
- [Mosquito bite avoidance: advice for travellers](#)

References

1. UK Health Security Agency. Imported malaria cases and deaths in the UK; 2000 to 2021. 20 April 2023. [Accessed 21 April 2023]
2. World Health Organization. World Malaria Report 2022 [Accessed 21 April 2023]
3. Gavi S, Tapera O, Mberikunashe J et al. Malaria incidence and mortality during the COVID-19 pandemic: analysis of routine surveillance data. *Malaria Journal*; May 2021; 20(1). [Accessed 21 April 2023]
4. World Health Organization. News. WHO certifies Azerbaijan and Tajikistan as malaria-free. 29 March 2023. [Accessed 21 April 2023]
5. World Health Organization. Initiatives. Malaria vaccine implementation programme. [Accessed 21 April 2023]
6. UK Health Security Agency, Advisory Committee on Malaria Prevention (ACMP). Malaria prevention guidelines for travellers from the UK: 2022. 8 February 2023. [Accessed 21 April 2023]
7. National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. NICE Treatment Summaries, Malaria. [Accessed 21 April 2023]