Malaria kills about one million people a year and sickens another two hundred fifty million. Most of the deaths are in young children in Africa. Malaria causes twenty percent of childhood deaths in Africa.

People become infected when they are bitten by mosquitoes carrying the malaria parasite.

A new study estimates the possibility of ending malaria in countries that have the deadliest form of the disease. Researchers found that this could be possible in most parts of the world within ten to fifteen years.

What it would require, they say, is reducing the spread of malaria by ninety percent from two thousand seven rates.

An international team created mathematical models and maps of areas where the disease is gone or almost gone. Andrew Tatem, an assistant professor at the University of Florida, led the study. Professor Tatem says a number of things have helped countries successfully fight malaria.

ANDREW TATEM: " ... such as relatively low levels of malaria risk to start with, political stability, a good health system and low levels of population movement bringing in infections from elsewhere."

The study says malaria could be eliminated if countries are serious about using proven control measures. These include insecticides and bed nets.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation partly financed the research. The study appears in the Lancet medical journal in a series of reports on eliminating malaria.

Other malaria experts writing in the Lancet expressed concern about giving too much attention to eliminating malaria. They say such a goal could take many years, if it is possible at all. The concern is that resources for controlling malaria could be lost if the money is spent instead on trying to defeat it.

Years of efforts to eliminate another disease, polio, have largely succeeded. Now, the World Health Organization says a new vaccine combination will help in the fight to end polio in countries where it is still found.

That report, based on a study from India, also appears in the Lancet.

There are three kinds of polio virus. Vaccination campaigns normally use vaccines designed to protect against all three types.

But cases of the type two virus have not been seen in years. And the new study confirmed that the type two vaccine reduces the effectiveness of the other vaccines when given together.

To avoid that problem, the new combination contains vaccine only for the type one and type three polio viruses.

And that's the VOA Special English Health Report. For more health news, go to voaspecialenglish.com. You can also find captioned videos of our reports on the VOA Learning English channel on YouTube. I'm Steve Ember.