

Overview

Malaria

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Malaria is a serious infection spread by mosquitoes. If it is not diagnosed and treated quickly, it can be fatal.

Malaria is found mainly in tropical regions.

It is not found in Ireland. But it may be diagnosed in people who return to Ireland from high-risk areas.

Symptoms of malaria

Malaria can be hard to spot, but symptoms include:

- [a high temperature of 38 degrees Celsius or above](#)
- feeling hot and shivery
- headaches
- vomiting
- muscle pains
- [diarrhoea](#)

Symptoms usually appear between 7 and 18 days after becoming infected. In some cases the symptoms may not appear for up to a year, or even longer.

Ask for an urgent GP appointment if:

- you have travelled to a country where malaria is found and you have malaria symptoms

Do this even if you've returned from travelling in the last 12 months or if you've been taking

antimalarial tablets.

[Symptoms of malaria](#)

Causes of malaria

Malaria is spread by mosquitoes, which mainly bite between sunrise and sunset.

Malaria can also be spread through blood transfusions and shared needles, but this is very rare.

[Causes of malaria](#)

Complications of malaria

Malaria can cause serious complications, including:

- severe anaemia - your red blood cells are unable to carry enough oxygen around the body, leading to drowsiness and weakness
- cerebral malaria - in rare cases, the small blood vessels leading to the brain can become blocked, causing seizures, brain damage and coma

Malaria is usually more severe in:

- pregnant women
- babies and young children
- older people
- people with no spleen
- people with a weak immune system

Contact your GP if:

- you're pregnant and travelling to a high-risk area

They may recommend taking [antimalarial tablets](#).

[Complications of malaria](#)

Preventing malaria

You can usually avoid malaria by using the ABCD approach to prevention.

- Awareness of risk - find out if there is a risk of malaria where you are going.

- Bite prevention - reduce your risk of being bitten by using mosquito nets, insect repellent sprays and wearing long sleeves and trousers (especially in the morning and evening).
- Check with your GP if you need to take [antimalarial tablets](#) - if you do, take them as prescribed.
- Diagnosis - get immediate medical advice if you have malaria symptoms.

[Preventing malaria](#)

Treating malaria

If malaria is diagnosed and treated quickly, most people will make a full recovery. Treatment should start as soon as malaria is diagnosed.

Antimalarial tablets are used to treat and prevent malaria.

If your GP is treating you for malaria, the type of medicine they prescribe will depend on:

- the type of malaria you have
- how severe your symptoms are
- where you caught malaria
- whether you took medicine to prevent malaria
- your age
- whether you're pregnant

[Antimalarials](#)

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