

Malaria

Malaria is a potentially deadly disease caused by infection with the microscopic parasite *Plasmodium*. *Plasmodium* is transmitted to humans through bites from *Anopheles* mosquitoes infected with the parasite. According to the World Health Organization, malaria is present in more than 100 countries—mostly in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. Each year there are roughly 300 million cases of malaria, and more than 1 million people die of the disease. Children and pregnant women are especially at risk for malaria. The March 23/30, 2005, issue of JAMA includes an article about malaria. This Patient Page is adapted from one originally published in the June 2, 2004, issue.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms usually appear about 9 to 14 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

- Sudden, violent chills
- Headaches
- Intermittent fever
- Seizures
- Sweating
- Delirium
- Exhaustion

DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

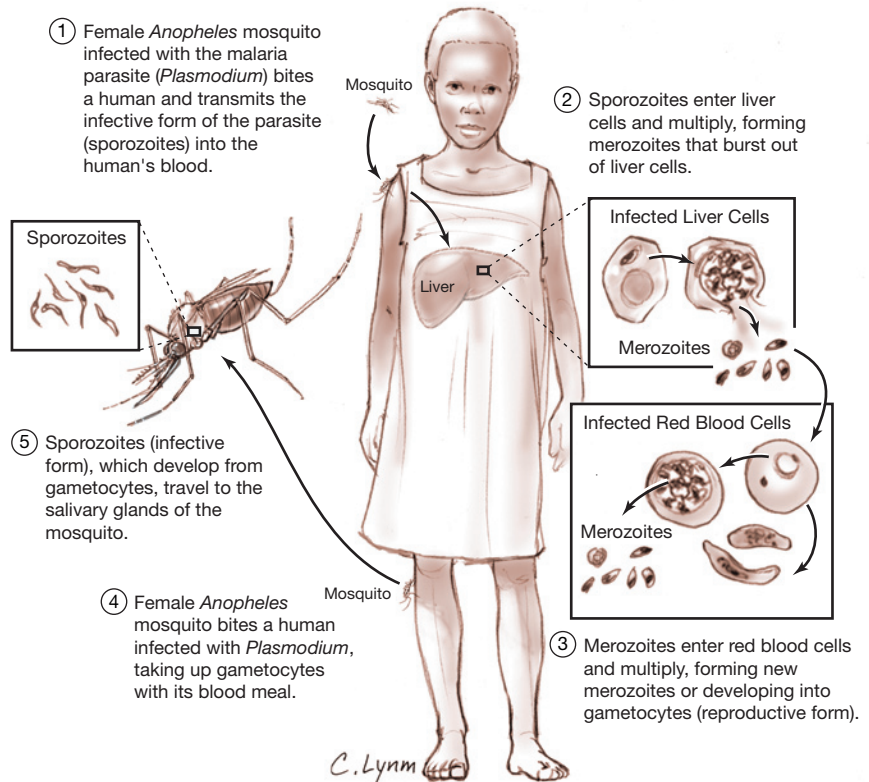
- Malaria is best diagnosed by using a microscope to identify the *Plasmodium* parasites in a blood sample.
- Malaria is treated with drugs that interfere with the parasite's lifecycle or metabolism.
- If you think you have malaria, seek medical treatment immediately.

PREVENTION

Prevention is based on avoiding exposure to mosquitoes and aggressively treating people who are infected. Malaria control programs in many parts of the world are underfunded and ineffective. If you are traveling to an area where malaria is common, take antimalarial drugs exactly as prescribed by your physician and prevent mosquito bites by

- Closing windows at night if possible
- Sleeping with a mosquito net, preferably one containing an insecticide, with the edges tucked under the mattress
- Covering up your body as much as possible with clothing
- Applying an insect repellent to areas of the body not covered by clothing.

Life Cycle of *Plasmodium*



FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
770/488-7788
www.cdc.gov/malaria
- World Health Organization
202/974-3000
www.who.int/en

INFORM YOURSELF

To find this and other JAMA Patient Pages, go to the Patient Page link on JAMA's Web site at www.jama.com.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, World Health Organization

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