

# Malaria

## Protect your Family

### What is malaria?

Malaria is a serious illness that can kill, especially babies and children, pregnant women, and people living with HIV/AIDS. There are simple ways to protect yourself and your children.

### How is malaria spread?

It is spread by the bite of a mosquito. You are at risk every time you travel to a country where malaria is common (even if you were born or grew up there).

### Where is malaria common?

African countries have the highest risk of malaria, especially Central and West Africa. But you can also catch malaria in Central and South America, in Asia and most of the Middle East.

### Can you be immune to malaria?

Yes, if you grew up in a country where malaria is common, you will have some immunity. But this wears off quickly when you move to Ireland. And your children who came to Ireland as babies or who have never lived in your country of birth will have no protection against malaria, and can easily catch it.

### How can I protect my family when I visit a country where malaria is common?

**Take anti-malarial medicine:** Before you travel, go to your doctor to get anti-malarial medicine – this will greatly reduce the chances of catching malaria. Make sure EVERY member of your family travelling with you takes their medicine. It is very important that they **finish the tablets/medicine** as prescribed by your doctor.

**Prevent mosquito bites:** When you visit a malarious country, protect yourself and your family against biting mosquitoes:

- Use an insect repellent containing DEET – talk to your pharmacist, they will advise you
- Use mosquito repellent exactly as the container says

- Cover up with trousers and long-sleeved clothes after sunset
- Treat clothing with insecticides
- Use knockdown sprays or coils to kill any mosquitoes before you go to bed – again ask your pharmacist about these
- Sleep in a properly screened, air conditioned room or under a mosquito net treated with insecticide.

### What should I do if I or my family develop symptoms when we get back to Ireland?

Antimalarial medicines are very effective but no medicines give 100% protection. If you do develop symptoms when you return to Ireland, go to see your doctor and tell him/her where and when you travelled. Malaria can kill, so get medical advice quickly. But remember, when diagnosed early, malaria treatment is extremely successful.

Visit <http://www.hpsc.ie/hpsc/A-Z/Vectorborne/Malaria/>.