



What is Malaria?

- 🔹 Malaria is a **parasitic** disease caused by one of four types of *Plasmodium* (*P.falciparum*, *P. vivax*, *P. ovale* and *P. malariae*), of which *Plasmodium falciparum* is the most common, but also the most dangerous in causing malaria in South Africa.
- 🔹 Symptoms can appear within 1 to 4 weeks after being bitten by an infected mosquito or it can take as long as a year to surface.
- 🔹 Typical symptoms, such as headaches, aching joints, fever and sweating followed by cold shivers occur intermittently at intervals of 1 to 3 days.
- 🔹 Malaria is often misdiagnosed as “influenza”, gastroenteritis or viral hepatitis.
- 🔹 Early diagnosis is vital with *Plasmodium falciparum*, as this form of malaria progresses quickly to the brain (cerebral malaria), causing coma and even death.
- 🔹 Malaria is endemic to the warmer areas of South Africa (Northern Province, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal), but can be spread by people moving in vehicles from one area to the next.
- 🔹 Malaria can have distorted atypical symptoms in patients that are partially immune or who used prophylactic medicine.

How is Malaria transmitted?

- 🔹 Malaria is transmitted:
 - ✓ Predominantly, by the bite of an anopheles mosquito.
 - ✓ Blood transfusions.
 - ✓ Via the placenta from a mother to her child.
 - ✓ Contaminated needles among intravenous drug users.
- 🔹 Malaria is a water-vector disease.

How can Malaria patients be treated?

- 🔹 Early diagnosis is essential to treat malaria falciparum successfully, preventing dangerous complications.
- 🔹 Diagnosis is best made by means of a microscopic examination of a blood smear.
- 🔹 Anti-malarial medication is available.

How can Malaria be prevented?

- 🔹 Use mosquito bed-nets impregnated with residual insecticides.
- 🔹 Use prophylactic medication. Consult a medical expert, as in certain areas; some malaria strains have developed immunity to anti-malarial medicine, some medicines have severe side effects, especially pregnant women).
- 🔹 Drain water puddles where mosquitoes may breed and spray homes and surrounding areas with

Reference: DWAF (2003). Management of water-related microbial diseases, RSA

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