

MALARIA: MESSAGES

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About the Message Library

People affected by disaster must have access to timely, appropriate and accurate information to help them keep themselves and their families safe and well. They should know their rights, entitlements and be able to give feedback. Responders have a duty to put in place appropriate, systematic and coordinated mechanisms to ensure this.

Our Message Library offers clear, concise and simple messages on a range of topics as templates for you to adapt and use in the context you are working in. These are intended to help you make a quick start on communicating with communities while you further develop mechanisms for on-going dialogue with diverse groups within each community.

For help contextualising and using the messages we recommend you do our e-learning course and read the following technical guidance.

E-learning

<https://kayaconnect.org/course/info.php?id=768>

Guidance

<https://www.cdacnetwork.org/tools-guidance/cdac-message-library-user-guidance>

What is malaria?

Malaria is a life-threatening disease caused by parasites that are transmitted to people through the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes. It is preventable and curable. There are 5 parasite species that cause malaria in humans, and 2 of these species – Plasmodium falciparum and Plasmodium vivax – pose the greatest threat.

Malaria is a preventable and treatable disease. Early diagnosis and treatment of malaria reduces disease and prevents deaths, and also contributes to reducing transmission.

Symptoms of malaria

The first symptoms – fever, headache, and chills – may be mild and difficult to recognize as malaria. Nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea may also occur. If not treated within 24 hours, Plasmodium falciparum malaria can progress to severe illness, and lead to death.

Children with severe malaria frequently develop one or more of the following symptoms: severe anaemia, respiratory distress in relation to metabolic acidosis, or cerebral malaria. In adults, multi-organ failure is also frequent. In malaria endemic areas, people may develop partial immunity, allowing asymptomatic infections to occur.

How is malaria diagnosed?

The surest way to find out if you or your child has malaria is to have a test where a drop of your blood is examined for the presence of malaria parasites. If you are sick and have the symptoms of malaria, the test should be performed straight away. Early diagnosis of malaria and its effective and timely treatment helps to shorten your sickness and prevents death from malaria.

How is malaria treated?

Malaria can be cured with prescription drugs. These need to be given to you by a trained health worker as soon as possible, before the disease becomes serious and life-threatening. It is important to finish the whole course of treatment even if you feel better after a few days. In order to confirm it is malaria, a blood sample may need to be taken. To get treated for malaria, visit your nearest health facility as soon as you can. This can be found at [insert info].

For whom is malaria particularly dangerous

Some population groups are at considerably higher risk of contracting malaria, and developing severe disease, than others. These include infants, children under 5 years of age, pregnant women and patients with HIV/AIDS, as well as non-immune migrants, mobile populations and travellers.

Malaria and pregnancy - why worry?

Malaria is very dangerous for pregnant women. Wherever malaria is common, they should prevent malaria by taking antimalarial tablets recommended by a trained health worker and by sleeping under an insecticide-treated mosquito net. If you think you may have malaria, visit your nearest health facility at [insert info here] to find out about treatment.

How to prevent malaria

Sleeping under an insecticide-treated mosquito net is the best way to prevent mosquito bites. Protection is needed after sunset and before sunrise, when malaria mosquitoes bite. Insecticide-treated mosquito nets should be used throughout the year, even when there are fewer mosquitoes, such as during the dry season.

How to prevent malaria (child friendly)

To protect yourself against malaria, sleep under an insecticide treated bed net at night and wear clothes that cover your arms and legs from dusk till dawn. This prevents the mosquitoes from biting you. Sleep under a net throughout the year even during the dry season.

Location of where to find bed nets

To help prevent malaria during this emergency, insecticide treated bed nets are being distributed by [insert info] at [insert info]. You may also find them at your nearest health centre or at certain shops in the market.

The importance of breastfeeding a child who has malaria

Frequent breastfeeding prevents your baby losing essential fluids and helps the child fight infections, including malaria. Children who are breastfeeding and suffering from malaria should be breastfed as often as possible.

Possible side effects of malarial drugs

It is important to complete your course of anti-malaria drugs. Side effects include vomiting in children and feeling tired. These are normal. Seek advice from your health worker if your symptoms persist or if you are concerned about it.

Care at home for children who have malaria

If a child with malaria is not treated within a day, she or he might die. Malaria usually causes a high fever and chills. A child with a high fever should be kept cool for as long as the fever persists by:

- sponging or bathing the child with tepid water (cool, not cold)
- providing treatment with medicine that prevents or reduces fever, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen.

Keeping the fever from going too high is important to prevent convulsions, which could lead to disabilities. A girl or boy suffering from malaria should be offered liquids and foods frequently to help prevent dehydration and malnutrition. As soon as you can, take your child to a health centre.

REFERENCES

For more information on this topic, we recommend you read the following references.

World Health Organization (2022). **Malaria**
https://www.who.int/health-topics/malaria#tab=tab_1

World Health Organization (2022). **Malaria: factsheet**
<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/malaria>

HELP US KEEP THE LIBRARY UP TO DATE

If you would like to contribute to topic reviews, have found a message that needs greater clarity, or wish to create a new topic, please contact us at info@cdacnetwork.org.