

19 Mar 2020

Malaria reminder during COVID-19 pandemic

Advice for travellers and health professionals

Malaria is a preventable, potentially fatal illness. Reducing deaths from imported malaria relies on:

- Good malaria prevention advice and adherence
- Febrile returning travellers seeking prompt healthcare
- Prompt diagnosis and treatment of malaria

Last year there was a marked increase in the number of notified malaria deaths in the UK; from the annual average of six to 15 patients [1]. The Malaria Reference Laboratory is currently investigating the reasons for these deaths.

During the current COVID-19 pandemic, many individuals present with a fever. Some will have Plasmodium falciparum malaria which will prove fatal if it is not diagnosed and treated.

Advice for travellers

As of 17 March 2020, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office issued an [Exceptional Travel Advisory Notice](#) advising all British people against all non-essential travel worldwide [2].

If your travel is essential and you are travelling to a malarious country, ensure that you follow all the important steps for malaria prevention:

- A** - Awareness of the malaria risk at your chosen destination
- B** - Bite prevention
- C** - Chemoprophylaxis (appropriate choice of antimalarial medication and compliance with the regime)
- D** - Diagnosis (prompt diagnosis and treatment without delay)

In the current emergency, please be aware that if you have returned from a malarious area in the last six months and have fever, you need a malaria film **the same day** that you develop fever.

Travellers returning from malaria risk areas who are ill should seek urgent medical advice and inform the health professional that they have travelled to a malarious area in the last six months.

If you have a fever and are phoning NHS 111 for advice, **please state that you have returned from a malaria area and need a malaria film**. They will advise how you can travel safely to your local A&E department for this to be carried out.

Individual country specific malaria risk and prevention advice is available in the [Country Information pages](#).

Advice for health professionals

All those being assessed for possible COVID-19 must be asked if they have travelled abroad in the

last 6 months. If their itinerary included a malarious country, they must have a blood test result for malaria on the same day.

Resources

- [Public Health England ACMP: Malaria prevention guidelines for travellers from the UK 2019](#)
- [Public Health England: Advisory Committee on Malaria Prevention \(ACMP\)](#)
- [Malaria factsheet](#)

References

1. [Public Health England. Imported malaria cases and deaths in the UK: 2000 to 2018. \[Accessed 19 March 2020\].](#)
2. [Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Travel advice: coronavirus \(COVID-19\) updated 18 March 2020 \[Accessed 19 March 2020\]](#)