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Malaria 1,2,3

Travelling to a malaria area? With just three simple steps you can avoid Africa's 'silent killer'...



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As we head towards summer, travellers to the sub-tropical areas of South Africa (and further afield) should remember that the steamy summer months are the busiest time of year for one of Africa's unwanted residents: malaria.

Although malaria is prevalent in the border areas of KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and Limpopo throughout the year, travellers to these areas should be especially vigilant during the months of November and April.

Malaria is also considered to be a threat to travellers visiting the lower lying areas such as Swaziland, and it is encountered throughout Mozambique, Zimbabwe and much of Botswana. Northern Namibia is also a malaria area.

"Because nobody is truly immune from malaria it is imperative that leisure and business travellers are at all times made aware of the risks associated with malaria and how to prevent possible infection," says Glenda Seeger, Operations Manager of Netcare Travel Clinics.

So how do you guard yourself against this nasty disease carried by the female Anopheles mosquito? There are three critical lines of defence that can safeguard you against Malaria:

Don't get bitten!

Personal protective measures against mosquito bites are the cornerstone of malaria prevention, whether in a high or a low risk area:

Take prophylaxes

Consult your travel doctor a few weeks before travelling to obtain prophylaxes that are effective for your destination. Many strains of malaria are drug-resistant - there are only three types of medication that are effective in Africa - so it's important to speak to a qualified travel doctor.

Your doctor will also be able to determine which medication is the most appropriate for you, as some prophylaxes do have side effects. Remember that your medication must be taken according to instructions and continued for the prescribed time after leaving the malarial area.

Be alert to feeling ill

Be especially aware of feeling ill after you leave a malaria area, and remember that:

"Strict adherence and compliance to all three of the above lines of defence are needed to ensure maximum protection against malaria," cautions Seeger. "Do remember that prevention is better than cure, as severe malaria is often fatal, even with the best possible care. We therefore strongly suggest that expert medical advice be sought prior to departure to a risk area."

"Be well versed in personal protective measures, take malaria prophylaxes if indicated and know the early symptoms of malaria. Urgent medical treatment is critical if you suspect that you may have malaria, and always think malaria first if you are not well."

To find out more, visit the Netcare Travel Clinics website.