

Do you want to know?

Malaria

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What is it?

Malaria is a severe infection caused by a parasite that can spread to different body organs and cause multiple infections. The parasite is transmitted to humans through mosquito bites, blood transfusions and infected needles. The malaria parasites enter the blood stream and multiply in the red blood cells, which rupture usually every 48 hours, thus causing symptoms of anemia, high temperature, shivering, pain in joints, headache and repeated vomiting. Disease severity varies with the type of malaria causing the infection. Malaria is a very common tropical disease (disease prevalent in the tropical countries like Africa), though it can be transmitted in subtropical countries. People traveling to tropical countries should take protective measures against malaria including antimalarial drug prophylaxis. Malaria is generally more serious during pregnancy.

What do you need to know?

Drugs



- Take antimalarial drugs as prescribed by the physician.
- Report to your physician any sign of adverse reactions of antimalarial drugs such as shortness of breath, itching, seizure (jerking, staring), blurred vision, epigastric (stomach) pain, or decrease in urine output.
- High temperature is an important sign of infection but you may use medications to control the temperature if your doctor agrees.
- Remember to store all drugs out of the reach of the children.

Diet



- Encourage a well-balanced diet to compensate for energy loss and enhance recovery.
- Encourage fluid intake to maintain adequate hydration unless contraindicated.

Activity



- Stay in bed during acute illness to conserve energy.
- Perform self-care activities to your best.

Therapeutic Measures



- Maintain body temperature within normal range. In case of elevated temperature, take medications to decrease your temperature and do sponge baths. In case of low body temperature, provide hot drinks and external heat.
- Monitor body weight, fluid intake and output, and vital signs.

Considerations



- Report any recurrence of symptoms such as high temperature, shivering, pain in joints, headache, and repeated vomiting.
- Do not lift heavy objects to prevent splenic rupture (due to swelling in the spleen) which is an uncommon but known complication of malaria.
- Report symptoms of swollen spleen such as respiratory distress, seizures (jerking, staring) diarrhea, bladder irregularities, and jaundice.

INSTRUCTIONS

The content of this educational leaflet is of general information. Ask your physician or health care provider if this content applies to you.

Prepared by the Nursing Services in coordination with other health care disciplines.