



MALARIA

What is Malaria?

- Malaria is caused by the parasite *Plasmodium*, which is transmitted by the bite of an infected mosquito from Anopheles genus.
- *Plasmodium vivax* and *Plasmodium falciparum* are the most common malaria parasites, while the *Plasmodium malariae* y *Plasmodium ovale* are well less known. The infection by *P. falciparum* is more dangerous and if untreated can lead to kidney and brain complications, even death.
- The symptoms are: fever, headache, vomiting and chills– they usually appear 10–15 days after the infected mosquito bite.
- Malaria is preventable and curable. It is recommended to reduce the risk of exposure to mosquito bite in endemic communities; the use of insecticide-treats nets and spraying inside the house with a residual insecticide is recommended.
- In some countries of the Americas, young men of economically productive age who work in mining are the most vulnerable population for contracting the disease. However, general population and special groups such as pregnant women are also at higher risk of getting sick and dying from malaria in endemic areas.
- The transmission of malaria depends in large part on climatic factors because the mosquitoes breed in humid conditions. Some regions identified as endemic continue to have a number of cases throughout the year. In other regions, malaria cases coincide with rainy season.
- To reduce the transmission, it is important to implement actions related with the early detection and immediate start of treatment based on the diagnosis and type of parasite as well as the screening and detection of possible related cases.
- Cases continue to occur in people living in precarious conditions and mobile populations such as migrants, miners and agricultural workers in areas where the disease is frequent.

Key facts

- In the Americas, there were 568,000 malaria cases and almost 220 deaths were reported in 2016.
- In the Region, it is estimated that 132 million people are at a high risk of contracting malaria.
- In 2015, there was an increase of malaria cases in Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru, Venezuela, and the Dominican Republic.
- Haiti and Venezuela report an increase in number of malaria cases compared to 2000.
- Eight countries are close to eliminate malaria: Argentina, Belize, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Paraguay, and Suriname.
- Population groups living in the areas of the Amazon continue to have the highest risk of malaria infection. In 2014, twenty districts registered the highest burden for this disease. These districts were from Brazil (10), Colombia (1), Peru (4), and Venezuela (5). Together they had 44% of all cases in the Region of the Americas.

PAHO/WHO's response

- In 2016, PAHO/WHO Member States approved the resolution [CD55.R7](#), *Plan of Action for Malaria Elimination 2016-2020*, through which they are committed to continue reducing malaria cases over the next four years. This plan also seeks to prevent the reestablishment of the disease in 27 countries and territories of the Region that have been considered malaria-free since early 1970s.
- PAHO/WHO works with the governments, nonprofit organizations, initiatives and networks that support efforts in the Americas for the control and elimination of malaria: Amazon Network for the Surveillance of Antimalarial Drug Resistance and Malaria Champions of the Americas.