



GAUTENG PROVINCE
HEALTH
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT

THURSDAY, 7 OCTOBER 2021

PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN TO A MALARIA ENDEMIC REGION NEED TO GET TESTED AS SOON AS THEY HAVE FLU-LIKE SYMPTOMS

The season of malaria disease which has similar symptoms as the COVID-19 is upon us once again. Even though malaria season occurs between October and April, South Africa sees malaria cases throughout the year.

The Gauteng Department of Health (GDoH) urges persons that had just returned from a malaria endemic area and develop any flu-like symptoms to get tested for both the COVID-19 and malaria disease.

Malaria is a life-threatening disease caused by parasites that are transmitted to people through the bites of infected female mosquitoes and can lead to death within 24 hours. Malaria symptoms include fever, headache, general body aches and pains, general body weakness, nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, diarrhea and “the flu”.

If you have just returned from a malaria endemic area and you start showing any of the above symptoms you are urged to visit your nearest clinic or doctor to get tested and treated for malaria. It should be noted that these symptoms are also similar to those of the COVID 19 disease. The main concern for the GDoH is that most patients with malaria present very late into health facilities with severe disease complications.

Even though the Gauteng province is not a malaria endemic area, it continues to see and attend to malaria cases throughout the year. The Gauteng province sees on average between 2 000 to 3 000 malaria cases every year, whilst the number of malaria-related fatalities averages between 20 to 30 deaths in a year.

The majority of these cases come from malaria endemic countries and regions such as Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Malawi, the Democratic Republic of Congo as well as the Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces.

Another concern for malaria in the province is the odyssean malaria, which is informally referred to as “taxi malaria”. This type of malaria is due to bites of an infective mosquito that has “hitched a ride” from an endemic area. Gauteng sees an average of three to four cases of odyssean malaria every year.

Malaria is endemic in 14 of the 16 Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, with the exception of Lesotho and the Seychelles.

The African continent carries the greatest burden of the malaria disease in the world being responsible for around 93 percent of the global 228 million malaria cases and 94 percent of the 405 000 malaria-related deaths that were reported globally in 2018.

Those travelling to malaria endemic areas should take along with them the recommended preventative malaria medications (chemoprophylaxis) which is available in any pharmacy and in the four public health travel clinics.

When travelling to a malaria endemic area practice the following protective measures:

- Regular use of mosquito repellants
- Wearing of long trousers and long sleeve shirts
- Being indoors between dusk and dawn
- Sleeping in air-conditioned rooms or in a room with a fan
- Sleeping in insecticide treated nettings

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Issued by Gauteng Department of Health

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