

Questions and answers on Malaria

Question 1: What is malaria?

- Malaria is a disease caused by a tiny parasite

Question 2: How is malaria transmitted?

- Malaria is transmitted through mosquito bites
- Malaria is transmitted from a sick person to a well person by mosquito

Question 3: Is malaria preventable?

- Malaria is preventable and treatable; but if a person with malaria does not receive appropriate treatment it can lead to severe illness and death

Question 4: How is malaria NOT transmitted?

- Malaria is not transmitted by eating or drinking (e.g. oranges, mangoes, and other sweet foods, palm oil, palm wine and beer – none of these food stuffs can give you malaria)
- Malaria is not caused by witchcraft or demons

Question 5: Why is malaria a serious health problem in Sierra Leone?

- It is the most common cause of illness in the country - it affects half of the patients who visit the hospital. Three (3) out of 10 are admitted daily due to malaria
- Malaria or its complications account for 1 out of 3 deaths in children under five and 1 out of 4 deaths in all agesⁱ
- It affects pregnant women and children under five because they are more vulnerable. Malaria in children can cause coma in 24 hours and death within 48 hours if not treated
- Malaria has serious economic and social effects due to loss of productivity and inability to fulfil roles in the family and community in general

Question 6: How can malaria be prevented?

1. **USE A LONG LASTING INSECTICIDE TREATED NET EVERY NIGHT, ALL YEAR LONG**
 - ✓ The net prevents mosquitoes biting anyone. Everyone should sleep under a Long-Lasting Insecticide Treated Net (LITN) **every night**
 - ✓ If there are not enough nets for every household member, priority should be given to pregnant women, children under five and people living with HIV/AIDS
2. **In 2017, over 4 million nets (one treated net per two people) will be distributed in the nationwide LLIN distribution YOUR COMMUNITY CAN STOP THE TRANSMISSION OF MALARIA**
 - ✓ When you sleep under a LLIN every night all year long, this will help stop the transmission of malaria
 - ✓ When 80% of your community sleep under an LLIN, the transmission of malaria will be disrupted in your community
 - ✓ A good neighbour sleeps under an LLIN every night all year long as a way of protecting the community from this dangerous disease
3. **GET RID OF MOSQUITO BREEDING PLACES**
 - ✓ Keep the house and the compound clean and tidy
 - ✓ Clear the gutters and fill-in all places where water collects or stands
 - ✓ Bury tires, empty cups and bottles and containers that can collect water
 - ✓ Dispose rubbish properly
4. **OTHER WAYS TO PREVENT MALARIA:**
 - ✓ Window netting

- ✓ Wearing long clothes
- ✓ Indoor spraying
- ✓ Prophylactic drugs
- ✓ Skin preparations (like DEET sprays and citronella based products)

Question 7: Why is it important for pregnant women to be protected against malaria?

- Malaria is particularly life-threatening and dangerous to pregnant women and their babies
- Malaria is harmful to pregnant women and their babies as the malaria parasite destroys the blood cells and makes women anaemic
- Anaemia in the mother and malaria parasites in the placenta can lead to women giving birth to babies early (pre mature) or born very small or die while still in the womb
- Babies who are born too early or are very small at birth are less likely to survive and be healthy

Question 8: How can pregnant women protect themselves against malaria?

- **By sleeping under an insecticide treated net every night**
- **By taking Intermittent Preventive Treatment (IPT)**
- IPT is another way to prevent malaria in pregnant women and protect them and their unborn babies. In Sierra Leone IPT is commonly known as SP (generic name) or Fansidar® (trade name)
- It is given **free** to pregnant women at government health facilities. It is 3 tablets, which should be swallowed under the supervision of a health worker. It should be taken at least twice during pregnancy from the 2nd trimester with one-month interval
- **Pregnant women should attend antenatal check-ups to receive IPT and a free treated net**

Question 9: What are the common symptoms of Malaria?

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|--|
| • FEVER/high temperature | • Inability to eat | • Head ache and Backache |
| • General body weakness | • Joint pain | • Sweating |
| • Feeling unwell | • Cold/chills | • Confusion |
| • Nausea or vomiting | • Diarrhoea | • Persistent crying or convulsions in children |

Question 10: Why is it important to take a person with symptoms of malaria to the nearest health centre or hospital immediately?

- To be tested for malaria or other illness. The only way to know for sure if you have malaria is to be tested.
- If you test positively, then you can receive the proper treatment for malaria.
- To get proper diagnosis and appropriate treatment to avoid complications that might lead to serious condition or even death.

Question 11: After getting tested and diagnosed with Malaria what treatment should people take?

- People who are sick with malaria should get a course of malaria treatment drugs from a health worker or community based provider.
- In Sierra Leone the best medicine is ACT (Artemisinin based Combination Therapy)

- ACT is a combination therapy and usually taken over 3 days

Question 12: Why is it important to finish ALL medications even if patient start feeling better?

- This will ensure complete cure, **on-going protection** and will prevent the drug from becoming less effective to malaria infection (development of **drug resistance**)
- Kills the parasite in the sick person and therefore stops transmission to healthy people
- Treatment is important for saving the life of an infected person
- Drink lots of treated water to keep hydrated
- Eat a balanced diet to include fruits, vegetables, meat or fish, rice etc.

Question 13: What is the Impact of Malaria on individuals, families and communities?

- Ill health due to malaria results in people being unable to carry out their normal activities such as taking care of the home and family, working to earn a living or going to school which means the community and Sierra Leone does not develop.
- Households in Africa lose from 25 to 28 per cent of income to malaria illness, according to estimates and the average African household spending on malaria treatment has been estimated at over 10 per cent of income Children fall behind in their school learning when they get malaria
- Large numbers of people (especially children under five) die from malaria each year, but **IT CAN BE PREVENTED**
- Businesses lose money because of employee absenteeism and increased health costs
- Overall the Sierra Leone economy and its development suffers because of the high incidence of malaria

ⁱ *Sierra Leone health and demographic survey, 2008: key findings (pdf 3.15Mb). Calverton, Maryland, Statistics Sierra Leone and ICF Macro, 2009*