

Malaria Prevention

Malaria is a serious disease that is transmitted by mosquitoes in certain parts of the world. In order to prevent malaria, where the risk exists, you need to avoid mosquito bites as much as possible, and take an oral medication while you are traveling.

The risk of malaria can be described in three general ways:

1. The risk is great enough that everyone should take malaria pills.
2. The risk may exist, but it is so low that many people would choose not to take malaria pills, but some may choose to do so.
3. There is no risk of malaria

If you are traveling to a malaria area and the decision is made to take malaria pills, the most commonly prescribed pill is called Malarone, also known as atovaquone/proguanil. This is a remarkably well-tolerated medication with few side effects, highly effective at preventing malaria, and only has to be taken while traveling and for a few days after.

Malarone should be taken starting the day you enter the malaria risk area, and taken once a day while you are there, and then for three days after you leave.

You should be aware that when Malarone was first licensed, it was recommended to be taken two days before you enter the malaria area, and for seven days after. This is probably longer than is necessary, and subsequent studies have shown that the shorter duration of time taking the medication will be just as effective, and easier to comply with.

Malarone is absorbed better when taken with food, but it is safe, and still effective to take it on an empty stomach. My recommendation is to take it with breakfast each morning, so you don't have to remember to take it at night when you are tired, or have had a few drinks.