

[*Name*]

[Contact information]

LETTER TO PHYSICIANS: Malaria notification at beginning of outbreak

[*Put Health Department logo here*]

[*Date*]

[*First, last name*]

[*Street Address*]

[*City, State, Zip*]

Dear [*Physician's Name*],

Recently, there have been [*Number of cases*] cases of malaria in our community. As you know, malaria is a serious disease caused by a parasite and diagnosis can be missed if health care professionals are not alert to the possibility of the disease. The symptoms of uncomplicated malaria can be rather non-specific. The most frequent symptoms in patients include fever, flu-like illness, including chills, headache, muscle aches, and tiredness. Loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea may also occur. Other clinical features include splenomegaly, anemia, thrombocytopenia, hypoglycemia, pulmonary or renal dysfunction, and neurological changes.

Since untreated malaria can progress to severe forms that may be rapidly fatal, malaria should always be considered in patients who are experiencing the above listed symptoms. Although rare, individuals who do not travel overseas can be infected with malaria here in the United States. Therefore, to prevent mosquito bites in your patients, tell them to:

- Avoid or limit outdoor activities between dusk and dawn.
- Wear long pants, long-sleeved shirts and socks outdoors between dusk and dawn.
- Use an insect repellent containing DEET on exposed skin.
- Close windows at night or install screens in windows and doors if left open at night.
- Sleep under a mosquito bed net if you do not live in a screened or air-conditioned house.

The first step toward diagnosis and treatment of malaria is to consider malaria in the differential diagnosis. Microscopic identification is the method most frequently used to demonstrate an active infection. Timing is crucial for treatment; therefore it is important that identification be made promptly.

If you had a patient that had these symptoms recently, please test them for malaria.

A complete guide for treatment of malaria can be found on the CDC Malaria Web site http://www.cdc.gov/malaria/diagnosis_treatment/treatment.htm. For management of suspected cases of malaria clinicians should call the CDC Malaria Hotline: 770-488-7788 (M-F, 8am-4:30 pm, Eastern Time). For emergency consultation after hours, call: 770-488-7100 and request to speak with a CDC Malaria Branch clinician.

Sincerely,

[*Name*]

[*Contact information*]