

Medicines for the Prevention of Malaria While Traveling

Primaquine

What is primaquine?

Primaquine (also known as primaquine phosphate) is an antimalarial medicine that is available in the United States by prescription only. It is available in tablets of 15mg base (26.3mg salt).

You should know that the 15mg base tablet is the same as the 26.3mg salt tablet. It is just two different ways of describing the same thing.

Primaquine has three distinct uses. It can be prescribed by itself for prevention of malaria while traveling for short trips in areas where a certain type of malaria (*P. vivax*) mainly occurs (see map below). It can be prescribed after returning from a trip of long duration in combination with a second medicine for preventing malaria. Finally, it can be prescribed as a part of a combination with another medicine for the treatment of malaria.

This fact sheet provides information about its use for the prevention of malaria infection associated with both short and long term travel.

Who can take primaquine?

Primaquine can be prescribed to most adults and children of all ages.

Who should not take primaquine?

Pregnant women and people with glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (or G6PD) deficiency should not take primaquine.

G6PD deficiency is a genetic disorder that some people may not know they have. People who have this disorder should not take primaquine because it can make them very sick and cause death in some instances. A simple blood test should be done before you use this medicine for the first time to make sure that you do not have this disorder. Nursing mothers should also test their babies to make sure they do not have the disorder before the mother takes primaquine

How should I take primaquine?

When taking primaquine for the prevention of malaria on a short trip, both adults and children should take one dose of primaquine per day starting a day or two before traveling to the area where malaria transmission occurs. They should take one dose per day while there, and for 7 consecutive days after leaving.

When taking primaquine after returning from a trip of long duration in combination with another preventive antimalarial medicine, both adults and children should take one dose per day for 14 days. The daily dosage for adults is 30mg base per day. Note that this is 2 tablets per day.

Your doctor will have calculated the correct daily dose for your child based on the child's weight. The child's dose should not exceed the adult dose of 30mg base per day.

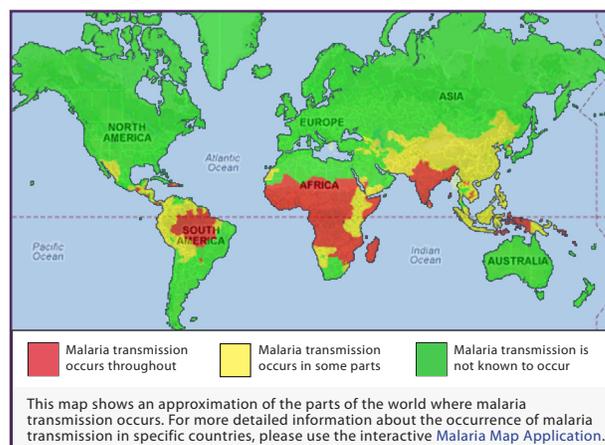
Always take primaquine on a full stomach.

In what parts of the world can primaquine be used for prevention of malaria in travelers?

Currently primaquine is recommended as one of the antimalarial medicines that can be used for short trips to parts of 12 countries: Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, and Paraguay.

Primaquine can be used after returning from long trips to most other countries in the world where malaria transmission occurs.

CDC keeps track of all the places in the world where malaria transmission occurs and the malaria drugs that are recommended for use in each place. This information can be found using the malaria map on the CDC website: <http://www.cdc.gov/malaria/map/index.html>.



Primaquine

Malaria is a serious disease that can cause death if not treated right away. It is caused by a parasite that can infect a certain type of mosquito which feeds on humans.

About 1,500 cases of malaria are diagnosed in the United States each year almost all in travelers to parts of the world where malaria occurs.

Where can I buy primaquine?

Antimalarial drugs are available in the United States by prescription only. Medicines should be obtained at a pharmacy before travel rather than in the destination country. Buying medications abroad has its risks: the drugs could be of poor quality, contaminated, or counterfeit and not protect you against malaria.

Will primaquine interact with my other medications?

Some other drugs can interact with primaquine and cause you problems. Your doctor is responsible for evaluating the other medicines you are taking to ensure that there are no interactions between them and primaquine. In some instances, medicines can be adjusted to minimize the interaction. You can also ask your pharmacist to check for drug interactions.

What are the potential side effects of primaquine?

The most common side effects of primaquine are nausea and stomach pain. These side effects can often be lessened by taking primaquine with food.

Persons with the genetic disorder called G6PD deficiency could experience severe jaundice, dark urine and low blood counts which is why they should not take this medicine.

All medicines may have some side effects. Minor side effects such as nausea, occasional vomiting, or diarrhea usually do not require stopping the antimalarial drug. If you cannot tolerate your antimalarial drug, see your health care provider; other antimalarial drugs are available.

Other considerations

- Good for last-minute travelers who know that they do not have G6PD deficiency because the drug is started 1-2 days before traveling to an area where malaria transmission occurs.
- Overdose of antimalarial drugs, including primaquine, can be fatal. Medication should be stored in childproof containers out of the reach of infants and children.

How long is it safe to use primaquine?

CDC has no time limits on the use of primaquine for the prevention of malaria. There is no evidence of harm when the drug has been used for extended periods of time.



For more information:

Check out the CDC malaria website at www.cdc.gov/malaria

Health-care providers needing assistance with diagnosis or management of suspected cases of malaria should call the CDC Malaria Hotline: 770-488-7788 or 855-856-4713 toll-free (M-F, 9am-5pm, eastern time).

Emergency consultation after hours, call: 770-488-7100 and request to speak with a CDC Malaria Branch clinician.

Prevent Malaria

- **Take an antimalarial drug.**
- **Prevent mosquito bites.**
- **If you get sick, immediately seek professional medical care.**