



DATE:	12/09/2015
TO:	Health Alert Network
FROM:	Karen M. Murphy, PhD, RN, Secretary of Health
SUBJECT:	Malaria Diagnosis, Reporting and Specimen Submission
DISTRIBUTION:	Statewide
LOCATION:	Statewide
STREET ADDRESS:	Statewide
COUNTY:	Statewide
MUNICIPALITY:	Statewide
ZIP CODE:	Statewide

This transmission is a “Health Advisory” that provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

HOSPITALS: PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, PEDIATRIC, INFECTION CONTROL, NURSING, AND LABORATORY STAFF IN YOUR HOSPITAL

EMS COUNCILS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE

FQHCs: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE

LOCAL HEALTH JURISDICTIONS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Malaria Diagnosis, Reporting and Specimen Submission

The holiday season, with its increase in travel, is a good time to remind clinicians and hospitals that all recent travelers to malaria-endemic regions presenting with fever should be tested for malaria. Early signs and symptoms of malaria (which may include fever, headaches, muscle pains, nausea or vomiting) are non-specific. The experience in the past year of evaluation of febrile illness in travelers from Ebola-affected countries in West Africa, where malaria is endemic, has highlighted the importance of diagnosing or ruling out malaria. CDC’s Malaria Diagnosis webpage

(http://www.cdc.gov/malaria/diagnosis_treatment/diagnosis.html) has guidance and tools to assist clinicians with evaluation of patients for malaria. Asking about recent travel and obtaining a thorough travel history is essential; a table of malaria risk by country is at http://www.cdc.gov/malaria/travelers/country_table/a.html.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health recommends that patients presenting with fever and recent history of travel to a malaria-endemic country be tested immediately for malaria using blood smears, the

gold standard for laboratory confirmation. The use of rapid antigen tests does not eliminate the need for malaria microscopy; both positive and negative rapid tests should be confirmed by blood smear examination. Healthcare 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). For emergency consultation after hours, call 770-488-7100 and request to speak with a CDC Malaria Branch clinician. Laboratories needing assistance with evaluating smears for parasites should contact the PA Department of Health Laboratories or visit CDC's DPDx website: <http://www.cdc.gov/dpdx/>. Digital images may be uploaded for review by CDC laboratorians.

So that more may be learned about the emergence and spread of malaria drug resistance, CDC is now requesting the submission of *Plasmodium*-positive whole blood samples from all malaria patients for drug resistance testing. Please send stained slides and EDTA blood tubes to the PA Department of Health Bureau of Laboratories, who will ship the specimens to the CDC. A Bureau of Laboratories Specimen Submission Form must accompany the specimens and include information on the patient's travel history and drug therapy. The specimen submission form can be found at <http://www.health.pa.gov/Your-Department-of-Health/Offices%20and%20Bureaus/Laboratories/Documents/Microbiology/BOL%20Micro%20Specimen%20Submission%20Form.pdf>.

Malaria is a reportable disease in Pennsylvania (<http://www.health.pa.gov/Your-Department-of-Health/Offices%20and%20Bureaus/epidemiology/Pages/Reportable-Diseases.aspx#.V13NIFwo6Uk>). All cases of confirmed or suspected malaria should be reported via PA-NEDSS or as otherwise instructed by your local health jurisdiction. Healthcare providers who do not have a PA-NEDSS account may request one by emailing PA-NEDSS@pa.gov. In addition, the CDC Malaria Case Report Form is at http://www.cdc.gov/malaria/resources/pdf/report/malaria_form.pdf.

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

This information is current as of December 09, 2015, but may be modified in the future. We will continue to post updated information regarding the most common questions about this subject.
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