

**To: Editors & Health Journalists**

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### **Start of the Malaria Season in South Africa**

The start of summer generally marks the start of the malaria season in South Africa, due to higher temperatures and increased rainfall in the malaria transmission areas. The malaria-endemic regions are beginning to see increases in the number of malaria cases as expected, marking the start of the malaria season.

We, therefore, urge individuals travelling to malaria-endemic areas to take the appropriate precautions. Travellers should consider taking antimalarial prophylaxis, particularly if travelling to high-risk areas. Both doxycycline and atovaquone-proguanil can be procured without a prescription from pharmacies and public sector travel clinics.

Make every effort to reduce contact with mosquitoes by limiting outdoor activity after dark, covering up bare skin (including feet and ankles), using mosquito repellents containing at least 10% DEET, ensuring mosquito screens on windows are closed, and using bed nets, fans or air-conditioning, if available. These precautions will substantially reduce the chance of acquiring malaria but the risk is never completely removed.

All travellers returning from malaria transmission areas, including very low-risk ones, should immediately report "flu-like illness" (headache, fever, chills, fatigue, muscle and joint pain) that occurs up to three weeks after first potential exposure, to the nearest healthcare facility for a malaria test.

Particular care should be taken with children, as symptoms are very nonspecific (fever, loss of appetite and vomiting). Malaria can rapidly progress to severe illness, often with severe consequences, early diagnosis and treatment are strongly recommended.

Healthcare workers, particularly those in non-endemic areas who are treating febrile patients, must remember to ask about their recent travel to malaria transmission areas.

A malaria risk map, FAQs and further information on prevention are available on the NICD website: [www.nicd.ac.za](http://www.nicd.ac.za).

For enquiries contact: [Media@nicd.ac.za](mailto:Media@nicd.ac.za)

Kind regards,

**Sinenhlanhla Jimoh**

Senior Communications Manager

National Institute for Communicable Diseases