



Title:

MALARIA WARNING: Malaria myths put travellers visiting friends and relatives overseas at risk

Summary:

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Body:

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The survey, released ahead of Malaria Awareness Week (12 – 18 May), found that 50% of people who return to visit friends and family in a malarious country, wrongly believe they have natural immunity to the disease¹.

The research also found that over half of those surveyed value the pre-travel health advice of family and friends over a qualified healthcare professional – a troubling statistic that could be putting many ethnic travellers in danger¹.

Every year, between 1,500 and 2,000 UK travellers² return from overseas trips with malaria, making Britain one of the largest importers of the disease amongst all industrialised countries³. On average there are nine annual deaths². Travellers visiting friends and relatives in malarial regions account for 60% of these cases⁴. Producer of Indian films Nitin Kapoor is just one example, having contracted malaria in this way when visiting his relatives in India. His real-life experiences can be found here; [Catching malaria while travelling in India](#).

Foreign news correspondent and Malaria Awareness Campaign ambassador, Rageh Omaar, says: ‘The common misconception is that if malaria is present in your country of

origin, you will have immunity to the disease for life. This is a dangerous myth. The truth is that any natural immunity begins to fade within six months of leaving your home country.'

Omaar continues: 'The fact that people are choosing to take health advice from family and friends rather than that of a qualified doctor or practice nurse may have created a false sense of security about malaria that has been passed down through many generations.'

If you have a friend or family member travelling to a malaria hotspot, you can inform them about some of the risks of contracting malaria while travelling abroad, and why they should seek qualified medical advice, by using the online form at www.malariahotspots.co.uk here; [tell a friend about the dangers of malaria](#).

Dr George Kassianos, GP and founding member of the UK Malaria Guidelines Committee, says: 'Malaria is not a trivial disease. All travellers visiting friends and family in malarial zones should visit their GP, travel clinic or practice nurse at least six weeks before travelling to get the best advice for them.'

'Malaria risk destinations change over time so it is essential to speak to a qualified healthcare professional who can tell you exactly what precautions are needed, ahead of every trip,' he adds.

Malaria Awareness Week runs from 12 – 18 May, 2008. To find out if the country you're visiting has a malaria risk, text 07800 000 571 or visit the [malaria map](#) at www.malariahotspots.co.uk.

The Malaria Awareness Campaign is calling on anyone who has ever suffered from this potentially fatal disease to share their story and help make malaria history in the UK. For more information about the campaign or to share your experience, please contact Lisa Bronstein on behalf of the Malaria Awareness Campaign: 020 7053 6003 / lisa.bronstein@beattiegroupp.com

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Notes to editors:

The Malaria Awareness Campaign is sponsored by GlaxoSmithKline Travel Health and supported by a leading panel of healthcare professionals, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA). The campaign aims to educate UK travellers about the risk of malaria and encourages them to seek expert medical advice before their journey.

Other facts:

In this 2008 omnibus study, commissioned by GlaxoSmithKline, British Indians, Africans, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Caribbean and Chinese (n = 750) were questioned on their attitudes to malaria:

- Nearly half (43%) of those surveyed do not believe there is a malaria risk in their home country
- 40% have never talked to their healthcare professional (GP, practice nurse, pharmacist) about malaria protection before travelling to their home country
- Nearly 1 in 5 respondents (17%) do not take any precautions against malaria when visiting their home country (i.e. insect repellent, mosquito nets or antimalaria tablets)
- Nearly half (44%) of those surveyed do not regularly speak to a healthcare professional to check if travel vaccinations are up to date
- 1/3 (32%) of respondents have never received any vaccinations

References:

¹ Malaria Study. Ethnibus. March 2008. (GSK data on file)

² CDR Weekly 26th August 2004, 14 (35)

<http://www.hpa.org.uk/cdr/PDFfiles/2004/cdr3504.pdf>

³ Muetener P et al. Bulletin of the World Health Organisation 1999; 77(7):560-566

[http://whqlibdoc.who.int/bulletin/1999/Vol77-No7/bulletin_1999_77\(7\)_560-566.pdf](http://whqlibdoc.who.int/bulletin/1999/Vol77-No7/bulletin_1999_77(7)_560-566.pdf)

⁴ National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC)

http://www.nathnac.org/travel/news/malaria_080507.htm

