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Dear Member

MALARIA ALERT: LIMPOPO

POLMED would like to alert our members – particularly those living in or travelling to Limpopo – about malaria infections recently reported in the province.

North-east Limpopo is one of the malaria transmission areas in South Africa. But besides a usual increase in malaria cases in this area, increased cases of malaria have also been reported around Lephalale and Thabazimbi due to recent heavy rains in the area. It is therefore important that POLMED members residing in or visiting these areas are aware of the risk.

What is malaria?

Malaria is a serious, sometimes life-threatening, disease that is transmitted (spread) by mosquitoes. The usual malaria transmission areas in South Africa are north-east Limpopo, the lowveld areas of Mpumalanga but excluding Mbombela, and the far northern areas of KwaZulu-Natal. Transmission in these areas is seasonal, with the peak during and just after the rainy season.

Malaria is particularly serious in young children and pregnant women, so both these groups should avoid travelling to areas where the risk of contracting malaria is high.

What are the symptoms of malaria?

It is important that anyone who experiences malaria-like symptoms receives appropriate and early diagnosis and treatment. Symptoms include **fever or flu-like illness with headache, cold shivers and hot sweats, and muscle/joint pain during or after travel to a malaria-risk area.**

How can malaria be prevented?

Taking the following precautions will help to reduce the possibility of contracting malaria:

- Remaining indoors between dusk and dawn (this is the period when malaria mosquitoes are most active)
- Applying insect repellent to exposed parts of the body to help ward off mosquitoes. Insect repellent products containing the active ingredient 'DEET' are most effective.
- Avoiding mosquito bites by using fans, air conditioning or insecticide coils, wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants and socks, and sleeping under mosquito nets.
- Using malaria preventative medication should also be considered when visiting high-risk areas, but these need to be prescribed by a doctor.

We hope that the above information will assist our members with taking the necessary precautions in malaria-affected areas.

Kind regards,

POLMED