

Health

First locally acquired malaria cases diagnosed in 20 years in U.S.

4 cases detected in Florida, 1 in Texas over past two months: CDC

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A mosquito is caught in a plastic box in the eastern German town of Leipzig on July 10, 2013. Five locally acquired cases of malaria have been confirmed in the U.S. for the first time since 2003. (Tobias Schwarz/Reuters)

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Five cases of malaria have been confirmed in Florida and Texas, the first time the potentially fatal mosquito-borne disease has been locally acquired in the United States in 20 years, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Monday.

The four Florida cases, along with one in Texas, have been diagnosed over a period of two months, the agency said.

The state of Florida said that its first case was diagnosed on May 26 in Sarasota County, while officials in Texas said on June 23 that a Texas resident who worked outdoors in Cameron County had been diagnosed with the disease.

The CDC said in an alert released Monday that malaria is considered a medical emergency, and that anyone with symptoms should be "urgently evaluated."

- [A new malaria vaccine could be a 'huge deal' in the fight to save lives in Africa and abroad](#)
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However, the CDC said that risk of malaria remains low in the United States, and that most cases are acquired when people travel outside of the country. Fully 95 per cent of malaria infections are acquired in Africa, the health agency said.

States issue alerts

Malaria is caused by five species of a parasite carried by certain female mosquitoes. Symptoms include fever, chills, headache, muscle pain and fatigue. Nausea, diarrhea and vomiting may also appear. Malaria can cause life-threatening damage, including kidney failure, seizures and coma.

The state of Florida has issued a mosquito-borne illness alert and recommended that residents drain standing pools of water, make sure their window screens do not have holes in them and use insecticides that contain DEET to repel mosquitoes. Long-sleeved shirts and pants are also recommended when mosquitoes are present.

WATCH | Scientists say new malaria vaccine could be 'world changing':**New malaria vaccine could be 'world changing,' U.K. scientists say**

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A new malaria vaccine developed by scientists at Oxford University could reduce deaths 70 per cent by 2030, and plans to manufacture it are already in the works.

The state of Texas has also issued a health alert, advising clinicians to routinely obtain a travel history to determine if a patient with symptoms of malaria has spent time outdoors and been bitten by mosquitoes in an area with malaria activity.

Health officials are also warning doctors, especially those in southern states where the weather is more friendly to the tropical mosquito that spreads malaria, to be aware of the possibility of infection. They also should think about how to access the IV drug that is the first-line treatment for severe malaria in the United States, the CDC said.

The agency said that the people who were diagnosed received treatment and "are improving."

LISTEN | Scientist who led the development of the malaria vaccine speaks:**The Current 19:28**

Vaccine could be a game-changer in the fight against malaria

Ghana is the first country in the world to approve the R21/Matrix-M from Oxford University, which could be a game-changer in the fight against malaria. Matt Galloway speaks with Adrian Hill, who led the design

and clinical development of the vaccine; and Dr. Fred Aboagye-Antwi, a medical entomologist and parasitologist who works with the NGO Target Malaria.

About 2,000 U.S. cases of malaria are diagnosed each year — the vast majority in travellers coming from countries where malaria commonly spreads.

Since 1992, there have been 11 outbreaks involving malaria from mosquitoes in the U.S. The last one occurred in 2003 in Palm Beach County, Fla., where eight cases were reported.

With files from The Associated Press

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