

Current Health Event

Malaria

Malaria is a life-threatening disease caused by Plasmodium parasites that are typically transmitted to people through the bite of an infected Anopheles mosquito — the "malaria vector." Malaria is preventable and curable; however, after more than a decade of continuous advancement in fighting malaria, progress has plateaued and no significant advances were made in reducing malaria cases in the period 2015 to 2017.

Editorial note:

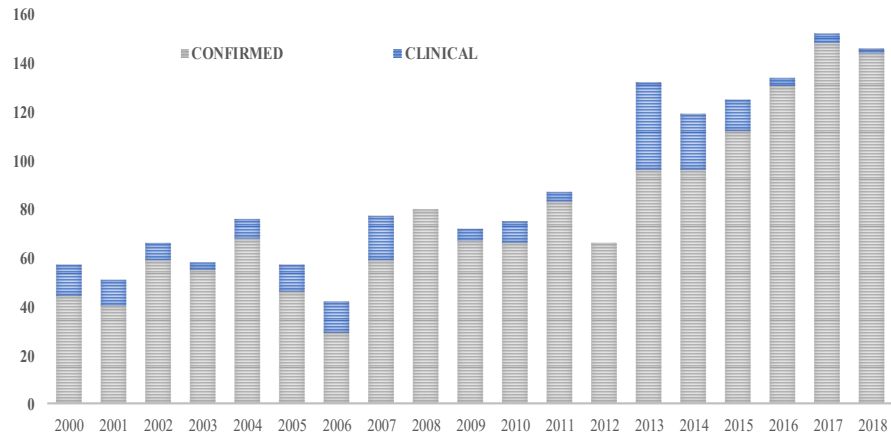
According to WHO's latest World malaria report in 2018, an estimated 219 million cases of malaria occurred globally in 2017 with an estimated 435 000 deaths as compared to 239 million cases in 2010 with an estimated 607 000 deaths. In 2017, 87 countries and areas had ongoing malaria transmission. 92% of malaria cases in 2017 were in the WHO African Region, 5% in the WHO South-East Asia Region and 2% (4.4 million) in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region with 8 300 deaths reported.

Some population groups are at considerably higher risk of contracting malaria, and developing severe disease than others. These include infants, children under 5 years of age, pregnant women and patients with HIV/AIDS, as well as non-immune migrants, mobile populations and travellers. Every two minutes, a child dies of this preventable and treatable disease; in 2017 alone, children under 5 years of age accounted for 61% (266 000) of all malaria deaths worldwide.

There are 5 parasite species that cause malaria in humans, and 2 of these species, P. falciparum and P. vivax, pose the greatest threat. Plasmodium falciparum is the most prevalent malaria parasite in the Eastern Mediterranean Region accounting for 69% of estimated malaria cases in 2017.

On World Malaria Day April 25th, 2019, WHO joins the Roll Back Malaria (RBM) Partnership to End Malaria, the African Union Commission and other partner organizations in promoting

Figure 1: Number of malaria cases presenting to the malaria center in Lebanon 2000-18



“Zero malaria starts with me”, a popular campaign that aims to prioritize malaria on the political agenda, mobilize additional resources, and empower communities to take ownership of malaria prevention and care.

Lebanon has been declared malaria free since 1963. A few breakouts of limited local transmission were reported in 1996 and 1998-99. However imported sporadic cases among Lebanese living in endemic African countries are reported annually.

In 2018, 146 imported malaria cases presented to the malaria center for treatment. This number has increased from 57 cases in the year 2000. With the support of WHO, the Ministry of Public Health in Lebanon provides free screening for all suspected malaria cases, along with therapeutic treatment and prophylactic treatment for travelers to malaria endemic countries. Moreover, the MoPH, in collaboration with WHO and the entomological department at the Lebanese University is currently planning for an entomological surveillance, including anopheles mosquito surveillance to enhance targeted vector control and environmental management.

Lebanon continues to be free of indigenous cases of malaria; however the risk of re-introduction of malaria to Lebanon should be kept into consideration as the anopheles vector has been identified in several areas in Lebanon. Additionally, although blood safety is well controlled in Lebanon, blood-borne transmission is another risk.

WHO Regional Objective by 2020:

- * Reduce the incidence of malaria by more than 40% compared to 2015.
- * Reduce malaria mortality rates by more than 75% compared to 2015.
- * Prepare 50% of endemic districts for pre-elimination
- * Interrupt malaria transmission in 25% of endemic districts with incidence of less than 1 case per 1000.
- * Eliminate falciparum malaria from two countries (Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia) in the Region.
- * Prevent re-establishment of malaria transmission in countries/areas that have eliminated malaria.

Notifiable Diseases in Lebanon [Cumulative n° of cases among all Residents (among Syrians)] as of 13 May 2019				
Disease	2018	2019	March	April
Vaccine Preventable Diseases				
Polio	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
AFP	88 (33)	36 (8)	9 (2)	9 (2)
Measles	952 (156)	939 (72)	286 (11)	350 (51)
Mumps	121 (41)	44 (11)	16 (4)	8 (2)
Pertussis	64 (26)	19 (8)	7 (3)	3 (1)
Rabies	3 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Rubella	11 (4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Tetanus	2 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Viral Hep. B	253 (28)	87 (10)	27 (2)	16 (1)
Water/Food Borne Diseases				
Brucellosis	242 (26)	51 (7)	18 (4)	12 (0)
Cholera	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Hydatid cyst	8 (2)	11 (1)	4 (1)	4 (0)
Typhoid fever	237 (4)	78 (1)	24 (0)	8 (0)
Viral Hep. A	899 (152)	154 (44)	25 (5)	18 (5)
Other Diseases				
Meningitis	420 (82)	128 (27)	48 (17)	33 (3)
Viral Hep. C	103 (7)	25 (3)	6 (1)	5 (0)