

New malaria case reported in Florida brings national total to 8

July 19 2023, by Cara Murez



The United States now has had eight reported cases of malaria, seven of

them in Florida, state health officials reported Tuesday.

Considered a [public health emergency](#), these cases are the first in two decades to be acquired within this country's borders, not reported by someone who had traveled elsewhere, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [warned](#) last month.

Seven of the cases have been found in Sarasota County, including the latest, according to a [report](#) from Florida health officials. The remaining case was [reported](#) in Texas in June and is not connected to the Florida cases, according to Texas Department of State Health Services.

Despite the seriousness, public health officials are not concerned about a widespread outbreak because there are fewer places for mosquitos to breed than in past years as building development has expanded, plus screens and [air conditioning](#) have left people less vulnerable to [mosquito bites](#).

"We don't think this is going to go broadly—say, to a nationwide outbreak—for a number of reasons," [Dr. Monica Parise](#), director of the CDC's Division of Parasitic Diseases and Malaria, told *NBC News*.

Past U.S. outbreaks have been "relatively small and contained," Parise said, and the latest one fits that pattern.

A parasite known as *Plasmodium vivax* caused the recent cases, according to the CDC. It's not as deadly as other [parasites](#) that can cause malaria, *NBC News* reported. Yet, it can still cause chronic infections for years if it lies dormant in the liver.

Symptoms can include fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, fatigue, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. They typically start about 10 days after a mosquito bite. *Anopheles* mosquitoes typically transmit the parasite to

humans, according to the CDC.

Although malaria is considered eradicated from the United States, about 2,000 people are diagnosed with it each year, typically those who have traveled outside the country, according to the CDC.

"Any case of malaria is serious and can progress to death. So, in any case, you want to make sure at the front line that you're doing prompt diagnosis and prompt treatment with the correct drug," Parise explained.

That treatment can include three days of medication to kill the parasite in the blood, then a two-week, at-home treatment to kill parasite in the liver. Among the ways to avoid infection are using bug spray, wearing long sleeves and pants, and draining standing water, the CDC advises.

Some of the patients in the latest outbreak had prolonged hospital stays.

"They are dehydrated, some of them. They have low blood counts, especially platelets, which puts them at risk for bleeding. Some of them have had renal kidney failure, which is one of the complications of [malaria](#)," Dr. Manuel Gordillo, an infectious disease specialist at Sarasota Memorial Hospital, told *NBC News*.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [malaria](#).

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