

# Cameroon starts world's first malaria vaccine program for children

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Health officials prepare to vaccinate residents of the Malawi village of Migowi, Tuesday, Dec. 10, 2019 where young children become test subjects for the world's first vaccine against malaria. Cameroon is beginning the world's first routine immunization program against malaria for children, a move that experts hope will mark the start of a campaign across Africa to dampen the impact of the parasitic disease. Credit: AP Photo/Jerome Delay

Cameroon will be the first country to routinely give children a new malaria vaccine as the shots are rolled out in Africa.

The [campaign](#) due to start Monday was described by officials as a milestone in the decades-long effort to curb the mosquito-spread disease on the continent, which accounts for 95% of the world's malaria deaths.

"The vaccination will save lives. It will provide major relief to families and the country's health system," said Aurelia Nguyen, chief program officer at the Gavi vaccines alliance, which is helping Cameroon secure the shots.

The Central Africa nation hopes to vaccinate about 250,000 children this year and next year. Gavi said it is working with 20 other African countries to help them get the vaccine and that those countries will hopefully immunize more than 6 million children through 2025.

In Africa, there are about 250 million cases of the parasitic disease each year, including 600,000 deaths, mostly in [young children](#).

Cameroon will use the first of two recently approved malaria vaccines, known as Mosquirix. The World Health Organization endorsed the vaccine two years ago, acknowledging that that even though it is imperfect, its use would still dramatically reduce severe infections and hospitalizations.



A mother holds her baby receiving a new malaria vaccine as part of a trial at the Walter Reed Project Research Center in Kombewa in Western Kenya on Oct. 30, 2009. Cameroon is beginning the world's first routine immunization program against malaria for children, a move that experts hope will mark the start of a campaign across Africa to dampen the impact of the parasitic disease. Credit: AP Photo/Karel Prinsloo, File

The GlaxoSmithKline-produced shot is only about 30% effective, requires four doses and protection begins to fade after several months. The vaccine was tested in Africa and used in pilot programs in three countries.

GSK has said it can only produce about 15 million doses of Mosquirix a

year and some experts believe a [second malaria vaccine](#) developed by Oxford University and approved by WHO in October might be a more practical solution. That [vaccine](#) is cheaper, requires three doses and India's Serum Institute said they could make up to 200 million doses a year.



Health officials prepare to administer a vaccine in the Malawi village of Tomali with the world's first vaccine against malaria in a pilot program in Tomali, Dec. 11, 2019. Cameroon is beginning the world's first routine immunization program against malaria for children, a move that experts hope will mark the start of a campaign across Africa to dampen the impact of the parasitic disease. Credit: AP Photo/Jerome Delay, File

Gavi's Nguyen said they hoped there might be enough of the Oxford vaccines available to begin immunizing people later this year.

Neither of the malaria vaccines stop transmission, so other tools like bed nets and insecticidal spraying will still be critical. The [malaria parasite](#) mostly spreads to people via infected mosquitoes and can cause symptoms including fever, headaches and chills.

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