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### Malaria

The risk of contracting malaria is often a concern when visiting the Kruger National Park. The Kruger is one of the two South African National Parks that are situated in malaria risk areas. The other park is Mapungubwe National Park. It is important to note that the risk of malaria in both of these parks is usually low, even in the summer months.

Malaria is mosquito borne disease transmitted exclusively through the bite of the female Anopheles mosquito. The highest risk period is between November and April - the end of the summer rainy season. Following the bite of an infected mosquito, an individual may remain asymptomatic for 12 – 35 days, depending on the species of malaria. This is known as the incubation period.

Malaria should be suspected in patients with any unexplained fever after visiting an area where malaria is endemic. The symptoms of malaria include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Sweating
- Headaches
- Body aches
- Tiredness
- Stomach problems – These can include:
  - Loss of appetite
  - Nausea and vomiting
  - Belly pain
  - Diarrhoea
- Skin that looks yellow – This is called "jaundice"
- Cough
- Fast heart rate or breathing

When malaria becomes severe, it can cause symptoms such as:

- Confusion
- Hallucinations
- Seizures
- Dark or bloody urine
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Most types of mosquito that are encountered will not carry the malaria parasite and if an individual is bitten it does not mean that they will contract malaria.

The risk of malaria can be reduced by preventing mosquito bites. Mosquitoes most often bite between dusk and dawn. People are advised to stay indoors during this period, or cover exposed skin with light clothing or insect repellents. Remember to spray one's ankles. Burning anti-mosquito coils and ensuring netted screens are kept closed will significantly reduce your risk for contracting insect bites. All of the accommodation available in Kruger is fitted with netted screens.

Malaria prophylactic drugs can be taken that will further decrease the chances of contracting malaria. It is a difficult decision whether or not to take malaria prophylactics when visiting the Kruger National Park. The risk of contracting malaria needs to be weighed up against the side effects of the malaria prophylactic medication, and all the drugs available have various side effects. The choice of the appropriate drug that an individual should use is a decision that should be made in consultation with a medical doctor. There are three types of malaria prophylactic medications available for the strains of malaria occurring in South Africa, namely Doxycycline, Atovaquone/Proguanil and Mefloquine.

It is also important to know that taking malaria prophylaxis does not guarantee that an individual will not contract malaria, it decreases the risk of contracting the disease. Malaria should be excluded in anyone who presents with unexplained fever within 12 to 35 days after entering a malaria area. A blood test is the most accurate, although rapid tests are available that are also very accurate.

