

Air Crew Occupational Medicine Department

Tel : +33.1.41.56.88.99

[E-mail: medicalpn@airfrance.fr](mailto:medicalpn@airfrance.fr)

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Attention : Dear Madam, Dear Sir / Attending Physician

Subject: Crewmembers and malaria risk

Dear Colleague,

You are the attending physician of a crewmember of our airline.

We would like to share with you our experience of malaria among our flying staff as well as inform you of the specificities related to their professional activity.

Air France serves approximately thirty stopovers in malaria-infected areas. All long-haul crewmembers may have to fly to these areas; they usually stay there between 1 and 6 days.

In compliance with health recommendations for travelers, the BEH* states that, for crewmembers as part of their professional activities, "a prolonged malaria chemoprophylaxis is not necessary and even contraindicated", and "a stand-by treatment is not necessary as long as they are not in an isolated medical situation". However, these two types of treatment must be discussed with your patient when he/she plans any holidays in a malaria-infected area, or a special activity (hiking, cruise, etc.), far from a medical assistance.

Despite this, every year we deplore a dozen cases of malaria, including two deaths and three severe cases over the past ten years.

These severe cases have been systematically related to a delayed diagnosis, most often resulting from **common, everyday symptoms**, like : flu, ENT or gastroenteritis infection symptoms, unusual tiredness, etc., accompanied by fever or even low-grade fever, which the victim is sometimes unaware of.

Fever, which remains the main warning sign, is cyclical, with peaks of severity. There may be no signs of fever for several hours, or even 1 to 2 days and may go unnoticed at the beginning.

We ask flight crew staff to consult a doctor as soon as they notice any one of these symptoms for an **emergency parasitological diagnosis (search for malarial parasites and/or rapid antigen detection test)**, and obtain the result within a maximum 2-hour period. Serology serves no purpose in the diagnosis of a severe malaria infection.

If the first test is negative and symptoms persist, change or worsen, the victim must systematically ask for the parasitological diagnosis to be carried out, prematurely if necessary.

We thank you for the attention you will give to this letter, and we remain at your disposal for any further information.

Sincerely yours,

The Air France Crewmembers Physicians