

WATAG Advisory Note

EMERGENCY TREATMENT OF MALARIA IN WA PUBLIC HOSPITALS

The treatment of suspected cases of severe malaria is a medical emergency. Rapid diagnosis and institution of appropriate parenteral therapy has been shown to have the greatest impact on a patient's prognosis. The initial management and treatment of patients presenting with malaria is now more frequently required at outer metropolitan and regional hospitals due to the number of Western Australians travelling to malaria-endemic areas. To address these medical emergencies, it is appropriate that all larger hospitals maintain a stock of parenteral and oral anti-malarial medications.

The WA Infectious Diseases Physicians Group (WAIDPG), the WA Committee for Antimicrobials (WACA) and the WA Therapeutics Advisory Group (WATAG) recommend the following.

1. All febrile returned travellers have thick and thin film microscopy performed for malaria if returning from a malaria endemic area.
2. The treatment of patients with malaria should be discussed with an infectious diseases physician or clinical microbiologist. Telephone consultation is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week via the switchboard at all WA tertiary hospitals,
 - Fiona Stanley Hospital - 08 6152 2222
 - Perth Children's Hospital - 08 6456 2222
 - Royal Perth Hospital - 08 9224 2244
 - Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital - 08 6457 3333and from several private pathology providers.
3. Where there is diagnostic or therapeutic uncertainty (eg unknown malaria species, possible mixed *P. falciparum* and non-*P. falciparum* infection or chloroquine-resistant *P. vivax* infection) artesunate-based combination therapy¹ is recommended,
 - **Severe malaria:** IV artesunate², followed by oral artemether + lumefantrine
 - **Non-severe malaria** (ie patients suitable for oral therapy): oral artemether + lumefantrine
4. All regional resource centres, district hospitals and Perth metropolitan hospitals with an Emergency Department should either,
 - Stock a minimum of one day's treatment with IV artesunate (ie 12 vials of artesunate 60 mg) and a treatment course of oral artemether + lumefantrine,OR
 - Should be able to transport the patient to, or access these medications from, a facility that does have these medications within 4 hours.

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¹ Refer to Therapeutic Guidelines: Antibiotic for details of therapy.

² Artesunate is not a TGA registered medicine but is available under the Special Access Scheme, Category A. Informed patient consent is required.