

# Overview of Travel Restrictions for Blood Donors

## Traveling or Residing in India

### Penn Medicine Lancaster General Health Screening

When a donor presents for a blood donation our staff will inquire if they have been outside of the United States within the last 3 years. We are checking if there was the possibility of a malaria exposure during travel.

Spending greater than 24 hours in an area with known malaria spread in the previous 3 months qualifies as an exposure and would result in a deferral. After 3 months a donor who has not experienced any malaria like symptoms is eligible to donate.

Prospective donors who have lived for at least 5 consecutive years in an area with malaria - endemic spread will be deferred for 3 years from the date that they departed the area. If that prospective donor returns to a malaria-endemic area within 3 years of their departure the 3 year deferral would reset, and it would be 3 additional years before they would be eligible to donate.

We also require a 3 month deferral for a donor who has taken anti-malarial prophylaxis. This deferral period would start at the cessation of the therapy. A donor would need to be free of any unexplained malaria like symptoms for the full three month deferral period.

### From the CDC

Our screening process is informed by CDC FDA guidelines. From the CDC website:

“The U.S. blood supply is kept as safe as possible from infectious diseases, including malaria, through strict Food and Drug Administration (FDA) screening guidelines for accepting or deferring donors who have been in malaria-endemic areas. Because of these control measures, malaria transmitted through blood transfusion is very rare in the United States and occurs at a rate of less than 1 per 1 million units of blood transfused.”<sup>1</sup>

As of April of 2020 the following guidelines have been implement for determining eligibility as it relates to potential Malaria exposure. The changes were motivated by the critical supply of blood due to Covid-19. The changes shortened the deferral period related to travel:

“Most travelers to an area with malaria are deferred from donating blood for 3 months after their return (previously one year).

Former residents of areas where malaria is present will be deferred for 3 years.

People diagnosed with malaria cannot donate blood for 3 years after treatment, during which time they must have remained free of symptoms of malaria.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/malaria/blood\\_banks.html](https://www.cdc.gov/malaria/blood_banks.html)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/malaria/blood\\_banks.html](https://www.cdc.gov/malaria/blood_banks.html)

## Geographic Definition

The map below provides an overview of the areas considered to be malaria-endemic by the CDC. When reviewing travel restrictions we reference the same map for determining eligibility.



For India specifically the CDC provides the following notes on transmission areas:

The areas include, “throughout the country, including the cities of Bombay (Mumbai) and New Delhi (the capital). With the following clarification, “No malaria transmission in areas above 2,000 m (~6,500 ft) elevation in Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, or Sikkim.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/yellowbook/2020/preparing-international-travelers/yellow-fever-vaccine-and-malaria-prophylaxis-information-by-country/india#seldyfm948>