

History of Malaria in the U.S.

Due to limited research of America prior to colonization by European explorers, the origin of how malaria came to the U.S. is unclear. Studies show, however, that when European explorers enslaved people from Africa and brought them to the U.S., the problem of malaria was exacerbated. It is believed that *Plasmodium falciparum*, one of the parasites that causes malaria, was carried by the people from Africa that were enslaved and brought to the New World between 1500–1800s.

Additionally, symptomatic and asymptomatic travelers from colonizing nations like Spain and Portugal are thought to also have carried the *Plasmodium* parasites with them. When they arrived at their new destination, *Anopheles* mosquitoes were already there to meet them. Feeding on the blood of the infected travelers, these local mosquitoes picked up the parasite and transmitted it to new hosts. The presence of competent mosquito vectors and a population of people in the new world who had never had malaria before gave rise to a widespread explosion of disease. The disease spread through the Jamestown settlement in the early 1600s and infected settlers and indigenous peoples across the colonies. By 1750, malaria had spread across the inhabited territories of what is now the U.S.