

# Mefloquine Malaria Prophylaxis

Liverpool School of  
Tropical Medicine



## Mefloquine (Lariam) Tablet

**Adult dose** is 250mg, one tablet taken once weekly

**Child dosage** is according to weight (minimum weight is usually 5kg)

### Mefloquine is unsuitable if you:

- Have had any mental health problems, epilepsy or fits now or in the past
- Have a heart conduction problem e.g. an irregular heart beat
- Have had any previous adverse reaction/allergy to mefloquine or quinine
- Are pregnant (1<sup>st</sup> trimester) – caution advised, seek specialist advice
- May become pregnant within 3 months of completing mefloquine
- Have myasthenia gravis
- Have severe liver or kidney function impairment, seek specialist advice
- Have suffered a traumatic brain injury – caution advised, seek specialist advice
- A history of Blackwater fever

It may also be appropriate to consider an alternative to mefloquine if you have a first degree relative with mental health problems or epilepsy.

### Drug interactions include:

Certain 'heart and blood pressure medicines', antiepileptics, zyban®, ketoconazole, moxifloxacin, halofantrine, antihistamines, ranitidine, cimetidine, chloroquine, hydroxychloroquine, rifampicin, tricyclic antidepressants, quinine, atomoxetine, phenothiazines and certain HIV drugs. **This list is not exhaustive so please check with your health advisor for possible interactions with mefloquine and your current medication.**

### Effectiveness:

Mefloquine is effective at preventing severe (falciparum) malaria. For effective prevention you must take the full course of tablets.

### Side Effects:

- Dizziness, depression, anxiety or sleep difficulties have been reported. Reactions most commonly occur within 2-3 weeks of starting the drug.
- Fits or unusual changes of mood - immediately stop taking mefloquine and consult your health advisor.
- Fine co-ordination and balance may be affected. Mefloquine is unsuitable for pilots, those pursuing hazardous activities and diving. Caution is needed if travelling to altitude.
- Visual disturbances – consult a healthcare professional

**No antimalarial drug is 100% effective,** careful anti-mosquito bite measures are important. Any flu like illness or fever (a week or more into your trip and up to a year after leaving a malarious area) needs reporting and a malaria blood film and result sought urgently.

### How to take mefloquine:

**Take on the same day each week preferably with food. If you have not taken mefloquine before, start 2 to 3 weeks prior to departure to check if it is tolerated. If you have taken it before without problems, at least 2 doses, a week apart, should be taken before departure. Continue to take mefloquine weekly whilst in the malarious area and for 4 weeks after leaving.**

Mefloquine can be taken up to three years in absence of side effects.

Periodic blood tests for liver function and eye assessments should be considered if mefloquine is used for a prolonged period.

### Children

There is no paediatric version of mefloquine. The dose is calculated according weight and a fraction of the tablet given (minimum weight is 5 kg). A pill cutter is recommended to break the tablet and provide the correct dose. The unused portion of the tablet must be discarded and not retained for use later.

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