



# 23. Chemoprophylaxis

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## Overview

- Some diseases are very serious (can make people very ill or even kill them) and very infectious (they infect a lot of people, usually very quickly). People who have been in close contact with an infected person may be at risk of being infected. For some diseases (for example, plague and malaria), **chemoprophylaxis** exists.
- Chemoprophylaxis means taking medication as a preventive measure to stop a healthy, close contact (e.g. family member) of the infected person from falling sick. Before the close contact shows signs of a disease, they may be able to take medication that will prevent them from falling sick.

## What to do and how to do it

### *Preparing for chemoprophylaxis administration*

1. Find out from local health authorities if chemoprophylaxis exists and is available for the disease(s) present
2. Identify which facilities offer chemoprophylaxis and how to refer close contacts and others (for example, malaria chemoprophylaxis for pregnant women and infants) to those facilities for treatment

### *Management and referral to treatment*

1. Identify close contacts of sick people and refer them to these health facilities for chemoprophylaxis.
  - Close contacts may include household members, partners, co-workers and children in the same class or dormitory.
    - Each disease will have its own definition of what makes a close contact. Take advice from health authorities during the outbreak.
    - Medications may be given to close contacts of a patient with plague, meningococcal meningitis, tuberculosis and possibly other diseases.
2. If you live in a community with moderate or severe malaria transmission, identify infants and pregnant women.
  - Get to know all the families with babies under one year of age. Visit them once a month.
  - Explain to pregnant women that they must visit the health worker for a check-up.
  - Refer pregnant women and infants to health facilities for chemoprophylaxis against malaria.