



PR#051-25

## PRESS RELEASE

### **MOHW Cautions the Public on the Local Transmission of Malaria in Belize After Six Years**

*Belmopan, April 15, 2025.*

The Ministry of Health & Wellness informs the public of the recent confirmation of locally transmitted malaria cases in Santa Elena Town and Cristo Rey Village, located in the Cayo District. These cases mark the first instances of local transmission in over six years, a significant development in the country's efforts to prevent the re-establishment of malaria.

Malaria is a febrile disease caused by parasites, transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected *Anopheles* mosquito. Infected individuals typically experience episodes of fever with chills and sweating every 48 to 72 hours.

The initial case was detected on January 17, with additional cases detected on March 11 and April 5. Of the four confirmed cases in 2025, three are attributed to local transmission, and one is classified as imported from Petén, Guatemala.

The cases were detected through routine surveillance at both public and private healthcare facilities. In response, the Vector Control Program, in collaboration with regional health surveillance officers, has implemented several measures, including:

- House-to-house fever screening
- Mosquito control activities, such as fogging and larviciding
- Community awareness campaigns to educate residents on symptoms and prevention.

All identified patients received appropriate supervised medical treatment and tested negative upon follow-up.

Enhanced surveillance has been activated along the Western border, particularly in the Santa Elena neighborhoods of Santa Cruz and Hillview, as well as Cristo Rey Village. The Ministry is actively testing individuals who currently have, or recently had, a fever within the past 30 days.

Residents presenting with fever and chills, especially those who have traveled to neighboring countries within the past 30 days, are urged to visit the nearest health facility for free malaria testing.

The Ministry reminds the public of the importance of preventing mosquito bites and encourages the use of insect repellent for persons travelling to neighboring countries. Using bed nets, maintaining clean surroundings, and eliminating standing water around homes are also encouraged.

While this development is of concern, Belize remains committed to maintaining its malaria-free status, which was first achieved in June 2023.

**Ends**