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## **Unitaid: Injectable artesunate for severe malaria**

### **What is injectable artesunate?**

Artesunate is an antimalarial medicine in the class of medications called artemisinins, which are extracted from the sweet wormwood plant (*Artemisia annua*). As artesunate is water-soluble, it can be given by injection.

### **How does it work?**

Artesunate can be injected into a patient's muscle or blood. It clears parasites and fevers faster than older antimalarial drugs such as quinine.

### **Who should use it?**

WHO recommends injectable artesunate in preference to quinine for the treatment of severe *Plasmodium falciparum* malaria in adults and children. Malaria is considered "severe" when it causes signs and symptoms that can be life threatening.

### **Unitaid and severe malaria**

Unitaid is supporting the adoption of injectable artesunate through a \$34 million commitment to improve outcomes for patients with severe malaria. The project is being implemented in six African countries that have high levels of malaria.

This grant – implemented by the Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV), the Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI) and Malaria Consortium – is creating a market for injectable artesunate and supporting a generic manufacturer to produce quality-assured injectable artesunate.

The grant also provides support to two pharmaceutical companies to develop a dossier for rectal artesunate, which is recommended by World Health Organization (WHO) for pre-referral treatment of severe malaria. This treatment, which can be given by peripheral health facilities and community health workers, can buy enough time for children with severe malaria to reach hospital.

### **The future**

The gains against malaria are fragile – continued support and coordination is needed within and between countries to beat the disease. Unitaid will continue to support malaria prevention, diagnostics and treatment with future calls for proposals for innovative solutions to this global health challenge.

*The main contributors to Unitaid are: France, United Kingdom, Brazil, Norway, Chile, South Korea, Mauritius, Madagascar and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.*