

# Pass notes No 2,879: Malaria

Didier Drogba is the latest celebrity to catch malaria, a potentially life-threatening disease

- [guardian.co.uk](http://guardian.co.uk), Wednesday 10 November 2010 20.00 GMT



Malaria is caused by a mosquito-borne parasite. Photograph: Kallista Images/Getty Images/Collection Mix: Subjects RM

**Age:** 50,000 years old, approximately.

**Appearance:** Under a microscope, a bunch of little lopsided circles.

**It's a disease though, innit?** It is. One that kills between 1 million and 3 million people a year, largely in sub-Saharan Africa.

**It's the one [Cheryl Cole](#) had, right?** Correct.

**So why is it in the news? Has some kind of vaccine been developed?** Not yet, no. But [malaria](#) is becoming the must-have celebrity ailment of 2010.

**Because Cheryl Cole had it? One swallow don't make a summer, mate.** Not just Cheryl. Chelsea striker [Didier Drogba](#) has also recently been diagnosed with malaria, and began treatment on Monday.

**How awful. Is his football career over?** Not at all. He came on as a sub against Liverpool on Sunday, and was to due to play against Fulham tonight.

**Cheryl was at death's door, and he hasn't even had to adjust his schedule!** Drogba probably acquired some level of immunity during his childhood in Ivory Coast.

**There's some kind of connection here, isn't there?** No there isn't.

**Yes there is: Ashley Cole. He plays for Chelsea! Cheryl must have bitten him during an argument, and then he probably . . .** I'll stop you there. Malaria is caused by a mosquito-borne parasite.

**So Ashley isn't a carrier?** No, but that didn't stop William Hill offering 7/2 odds on him contracting malaria, making him the favourite celeb to be the next to catch this fashionable, often fatal, disease.

**Isn't that a bit crass, considering that malaria is overwhelmingly a disease of poverty? And who else is on the list please?** Yes it is, and also on the list are Robson Green (14/1), Dannii Minogue (25/1) and Katie Price (33/1), among others.

**Do say:** "This year 249,999,998 other people will get malaria, out of a world population of 6.7 billion. Those are the odds we should be talking about."

**Don't say:** "Twenty quid on Adrian Chiles at 50 to 1, please."