

Otuke residents resort to herbs after malaria drugs shortage

Cause. Health official blames shortage of malaria drugs on high malaria prevalence.

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OTUKE. Residents of Otuke District have resorted to using herbal medicines to treat malaria following a shortage of malaria drugs in government health facilities.

They extract herbal medicines from leaves, roots and barks of various trees and plants to treat malaria.

District health educator Patrick Opio told *Daily Monitor* on Monday that the shortage of malaria drugs in the district was caused by the high malaria prevalence.

"There is very high rate of malaria in the district. Out of every 20 people admitted in government health facilities, 15 are always diagnosed with malaria and between 80 to 100 of people who go for treatment at the out-patient department, you

find that more than half are suffering from malaria."

He added: "I have been to Orum Health Centre IV, Aliwang Health Centre III, Okwang Health Centre III and Olilim Health Centre III, they are all the same. Majority of people admitted are suffering from malaria and most of them are pregnant women and children aged five years and below."

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PATRICK OPIO, HEALTH OFFICIAL

Mr Opio added that because of the high rate of malaria in the district, drugs supplied by National Medical Stores get finished within a few days.

"Locals are now using traditional

medicines extracted from various plants in attempt to treat malaria, but this is very dangerous," he said.

Mr Opio called upon the Health ministry to increase the amount of malaria drugs supplied to the district. He advised residents to fill waterlogged areas near their homesteads and clear the bushes where mosquitoes breed from to reduce malaria infections.

Mr Opio also asked residents to ensure that they sleep under mosquito nets which was recently distributed to them by the government.

He said the district had launched an indoor spraying exercise on Monday to kill malaria-carrying mosquitoes, adding that the exercise would end on July 21.

"We have trained 163 spray pump operators and supervisors for the exercise. We are calling upon local leaders to mobilise residents to ensure that their houses are sprayed by pump operators," Mr Opio said.

Malaria statistics

Statistics from the Ministry of Health show that malaria is still the leading cause of death in Uganda, accounting for more than 27 per cent of deaths.

The statistics also show that Uganda has the world's highest malaria incidence, with a rate of 478 cases per 1,000 population per year.

Uganda ranks as the sixth among African countries with high malaria-related mortality rates.

Across Africa, reports from the World Health Organisation show that one in four children are still not protected by mosquito nets or indoor residual spraying and about half of all pregnant women at risk of suffering from malaria do not receive preventive treatment. Sub-Saharan Africa carries a disproportionately high share of the global malaria burden. In 2015, the region was home to 88 per cent of malaria cases and 90 per cent of malaria deaths.



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