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## [Malaria parasites opt for ‘safety in numbers’ in response to drugs](#)

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Female *Anopheles stephensi* (Sinclair Stammers, Sarah Reece)

Malaria parasites can detect when they are being threatened and change their behaviour to aid their chances of survival, according to a recent study from the University of Edinburgh.

Malaria, which causes one million deaths each year, arises when malaria parasites replicate within blood cells of the human body. But not all of the malaria parasites will replicate themselves; some will develop into a transmissible form of the parasite capable of infecting a new host.

The recent study showed that when the human malaria parasite, *Plasmodium falciparum*, was exposed to low doses of anti-malarial drugs, the parasites opted to invest more in replication and produced less transmissible forms. The malaria parasite appeared to take a ‘safety in numbers’ tactic to increase the chances of it surviving the medicine.

Dr Sarah Reece, of the University’s School of Biological Sciences, who led the research, said: “This study uncovers a new way that parasites are able to resist the effects of drugs. This is also likely to have important implications for human disease control strategies.”

For more information: <http://reece.bio.ed.ac.uk/>

-Laura Bailey

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