



FACT SHEET

Cholera

What is it?

Cholera is an intestinal disease caused by bacteria called *Vibrio cholerae*. In countries reporting outbreaks of cholera, the bacteria may be in the water supply, uncooked seafood, or other contaminated foods. Cholera is very rare in the United States

Symptoms

Symptoms usually start 2-3 days after exposure and include:

- Sudden onset of severe watery diarrhea
- Occasional vomiting and cramping
- Dehydration (loss of fluids), if not treated
- In severe untreated cases, death may occur in a few hours

How is it spread?

- Mainly through drinking water contaminated with bowel movements or vomitus from infected people.
- Also through direct contact with the stools (bowel movements) of infected people.
- Eating raw or undercooked seafood from polluted waters.
- Eating other foods that have been contaminated by dirty water, stool, soiled hands, or flies.

Diagnosis and Treatment

- The bacteria can be cultured from the stool
- Mild or moderate cases – Give the person plenty of fluids to drink by mouth.

- Severe cases are treated using intravenously administered fluids and antibiotics such as tetracycline or doxycycline.

Prevention

Follow traveler's advisories if you travel in countries reporting cholera:

- Drink only bottled, carbonated water, or boiled water.
- If tap water is the only source, boil or treat water with chlorine.
- Avoid drinks with ice that may have been made with untreated water.
- Avoid uncooked vegetables and fruits. Fruit with intact peels (bananas and oranges) that you can peel yourself are safe.
- Avoid raw or undercooked meats, particularly seafood.
- Eat only cooked foods that are served hot
- After cooking or boiling food and water, protect against contamination by flies.
- Avoid food and drink from street vendors
- Pay attention to personal hygiene, especially washing hands with soap and water before meals.
- Cholera vaccine is no longer available in the United States and is no longer recommended. Although some countries use to require cholera vaccination for entry, these requirements no longer exist.

Report all cases to El Paso Department of Public Health by calling 915-771-5810

