**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 915-212-6520**