

CHOLERA

PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR LOVED ONES

1

What is cholera?

Cholera is an infectious disease that causes severe watery diarrhoea, which can lead to dehydration and even death if untreated. It is caused by eating food or drinking water contaminated with a bacterium called *Vibrio cholerae*.

2

What are the signs and symptoms of cholera?

Symptoms are often mild and can begin as soon as a few hours or as long as five days after infection. They typically include:

- Large volumes of explosive watery diarrhea, sometimes called "rice water stools" because it can look like water that has been used to wash rice
- Vomiting
- Leg cramps
- Dehydration occurs rapidly and if untreated can be fatal

3

Who is at risk of getting cholera?

People at risk of contracting cholera are those exposed to unsafe drinking water, contaminated rivers (bathing/ swimming) poor sanitation and inadequate hygiene.

4

How does a person get cholera?

You can get cholera by drinking water or eating food contaminated with human faeces. Soiled hands can also contaminate clean drinking water and food.

5

What should you do if you or someone you know gets sick?

If you think you or a member of your family might have cholera, seek medical attention immediately.

6

How is cholera treated?

Cholera can be treated by immediate replacement of the fluid and salts lost through diarrhea. Patients can be treated with Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS).

7

How can you avoid getting cholera?

Use safe water

In areas where water supplies may be contaminated, the most cost-effective method is chlorination of water in a storage container using household bleach:

- Add one teaspoon (5 ml, or one capful if bottle has a screw cap) of household bleach to 20- 25 litres of water.
- Thoroughly mix solution with the water and allow to stand for at least two hours (preferably overnight) before use.
- Water should be stored covered in clean containers.

Boiling is also effective, however, there is a potential for microbial re-growth if the boiled water is stored beyond 1 - 2 days. Filtration may be necessary in addition to boiling if the only water available contains much particulate matter:

- Use a piece of clean white cloth to cover the opening of a 20-25 litre water container.
- Pour water through the clean cloth into the container.
- Clean the cloth and make sure it is always clean for future use

Hygiene: Wash your hands often with soap and clean water, especially before you eat or prepare food and after using the bathroom. If no water and soap are available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 70% alcohol.

Food safety: Make sure you use only safe water for drinking and preparing food.



NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Division of the National Health Laboratory Service

Cholera Prevention



Drink and use
safe water



Wash hands regularly
with soap and safe
water

Cholera Symptoms



Watery
diarrhoea



Vomiting



Leg
cramps