

# Cholera General Information

## What is cholera?

Cholera is an illness caused by an infection of the intestine with the bacteria *Vibrio cholerae*.

## Who can get cholera?

Anyone who drinks water or eats food contaminated by the bacteria can get cholera. Cholera does not spread from person to person directly.

The disease is spread by contaminated human stool. Water can get contaminated when sewage and drinking water are not properly treated. Cholera bacteria have also been found in some brackish rivers and coastal waters. A few people have been infected with cholera after eating raw or undercooked shellfish from these waters.

## What are the symptoms?

Most people who get cholera have no symptoms, or only mild diarrhea. About 5% of infected people will have severe symptoms that include a large amount of watery diarrhea and vomiting. In these people, the rapid loss of fluids can lead to dehydration, which if not treated can lead to death.

## What is the treatment?

Cholera can be treated with antibiotics prescribed by your doctor. People with severe symptoms will be treated for dehydration.

## How can you prevent cholera?

- Avoid eating raw or undercooked shellfish.
- When you travel to countries or areas where cholera has occurred:
  - Drink only water that you have boiled or treated with chlorine or iodine.
  - Avoid undercooked or raw shellfish.
  - Eat only foods that have been thoroughly cooked. Eat only foods that you have peeled yourself.
  - Eat only cooked vegetable and avoid salads.