

Cholera Information Sheet

What is Cholera?

Cholera is an acute bacterial intestinal infection leading to severe dehydration. The disease occurs in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, South and Central America, Mexico and parts of Europe.

Symptoms can appear from a few hours to 5 days after having contact with the bacteria.

What are the symptoms?

People exposed to cholera may experience mild to severe diarrhea, vomiting and dehydration. Fever is usually absent.

How soon do symptoms appear?

The symptoms may appear from 6 hours to 5 days after exposure, but usually within 2 to 3 days.

How does it spread?

Cholera is spread by direct and indirect contact with stool or vomitus from an infected person. The usual mode of infection is ingestion of contaminated water or food (particularly raw or undercooked shellfish), moist grains held at room temperature, and raw or partially dried fish. Direct person-to-person spread has not been documented. People having low gastric acidity are at increased risk for cholera infection.

Is there a vaccine for cholera?

A vaccine is available and is sometimes recommended for travellers to certain foreign countries where cholera is occurring.

How can cholera be prevented?

Thorough hand washing is the best prevention.

- Make sure hands are properly washed after using the toilet, handling diapers or before preparing foods.
- Drink water from a safe supply. Chlorinate or boil water used for drinking, cooking and washing dishes.
- Disinfect linens and articles used by patients if soiled by faeces or vomitus with heat, carbolic acid or other disinfectant.
- Faeces can be discharged directly into municipal sewers. Disinfection is required for discharge into private sewage systems.
- People with diarrhea should not prepare food or haul water for others.

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For further information, please call:

York Region Health Services *Health Connection*

1-800-361-5653

www.region.york.on.ca