

IDRS Infectious Disease Reporting System

Disease Reporting 24 Hours a Day

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health

CHOLERA

Cholera is an illness caused by infection with the bacterium *Vibrio cholerae*. The bacterium causes watery diarrhea and dehydration. Cholera usually occurs in places that have poor water treatment and sanitation.

Symptoms

It can take anywhere from a few hours to 5 days for symptoms to appear after infection. Symptoms usually appear suddenly within 2-3 days. Symptoms include:

- Watery diarrhea
- Vomiting and abdominal cramping
- Leg cramps
- Dehydration (loss of fluids), if not treated
- In severe cases, the ill person may lose fluids so quickly that they die within hours

Transmission

- Cholera is usually spread by water or food sources that have been contaminated by stool (poop) from a person infected with cholera.
- People can sometimes get cholera by touching hands or eating food contaminated with stool from someone sick with cholera.
- Some seafood and shellfish live in cholera-contaminated waters, and can infect humans if eaten raw.

Treatment

- To test for cholera, a health care provider can take a stool sample and send it to a laboratory.
- Many people with cholera can recover without treatment. Severe cases may need antibiotics and an IV to replace lost fluid.
- The most important treatment for cholera is fluids. Drink water or rehydration solution (a mixture of water, sugar, and salts) to help stay healthy.

Prevention

- Wash hands with soap and water before you eat, prepare food, and after using the bathroom. If no water and soap are available, use an alcohol-based hand cleaner (with at least 60% alcohol).
- Avoid raw or undercooked meats, particularly seafood.
- Follow travelers' advisories if you visit countries with poor water treatment and sanitation:
 - Use bottled, carbonated, or disinfected water for EVERYTHING: drinking, washing dishes, brushing your teeth, washing and preparing food, or making ice. If tap water is the only source, boil or treat water with special filters, chemical packets, or 2 drops of household bleach per liter of water.
 - Eat only cooked foods that are served hot. Fresh fruit that you peel yourself is safe.
 - Flies can contaminate food or water. Don't eat food or water that has been left out in the open.
 - Avoid food and drinks from street vendors.

Additional Information

Ohio Law says that food service workers with cholera should not handle or prepare food until they have recovered. Stay home from work until diarrhea is gone.

All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.



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