

CHOLERA

(*Vibrio cholerae*-serogroup 01)



What is Cholera?

Cholera is an acute diarrheal disease that can kill within hours if left untreated. There are an estimated 3-5 million cholera cases and 100,000-120,000 deaths due to cholera every year. *Vibrio cholerae* (serogroup 01) is a toxin-producing bacterium and it is typically found in feces polluted water bodies and areas of poor sanitation. In the US, cases of cholera (serogroup 01) are rare, and usually involve individuals who have visited foreign countries such as India, sub-Saharan Africa and South American countries. Cholera epidemics occur usually due to disaster and/or overcrowded settings which many times lead to poor sanitation and exposure to contaminated water.

How is it spread?

Cholera is spread through ingestion of fecal contaminated food and water. Cholera is not easily spread from person to person, however, if an individual is exposed to contaminated water or food contaminated with fecal material, they can contract cholera. People with compromised immune systems are the most susceptible to cholera; however, everyone is susceptible to this disease if exposed.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Symptoms are profuse watery diarrhea (rice water stool), severe dehydration and shock. Dehydration, especially in infants and the elderly, may be severe.

What is the incubation period and how long is it communicable?

The incubation period is between 2 hours and 5 days. Cholera can be communicable through contact with an infected person for the period of time that diarrhea is present and possibly longer.

Can I prevent this disease?

Avoid consuming or bathing in contaminated water. The best prevention is to wash your hands vigorously with soap and water especially:

- After:** Toilet visits
- Cleaning up vomitus or diarrhea (use gloves)
- Handling diapers (use gloves)
- Handling soiled clothes or linens (use gloves)
- Contact with a symptomatic person

- Before:** Eating, preparing food

It is recommended to use spray bottles to apply the disinfectant (1 part bleach to 9 part of cool water to be prepared daily) to contaminated surfaces such as toilets, sinks, floors, tables, water fountains or any areas where a sick individual has been.

What should I do about it?

Persons who have these symptoms should see their physicians. This is an immediately reportable disease and should be reported to Santa Rosa County Health Department.

For more information, please contact the Santa Rosa County Health Department, Epidemiology program at (850) 983-5200 x105 or x140.