



CALHOUN COUNTY

## Public Health Department

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190 E Michigan Ave  
Battle Creek, MI 49014

[calhouncountymi.gov/publichealth](http://calhouncountymi.gov/publichealth)  
269-969-6370

### Fact Sheet

## Cholera

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### **What is cholera?**

Cholera is a bacterial disease that affects the intestinal tract causing diarrhea and vomiting. The infection is often mild or without symptoms, but sometimes it can be severe. Cholera is rare in the United States but more common in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. The highest risk for contracting cholera occurs when people travel on those continents.

### **How is cholera spread?**

The cholera bacteria are passed in feces. Generally, people are infected by eating or drinking food or water contaminated by fecal waste. This occurs most often in underdeveloped countries lacking adequate water treatment and proper sewage disposal. Infection can also occur by eating raw or undercooked seafood from polluted waters. Problems can also arise when foods are contaminated by feces, soiled hands, or flies.

The disease is not likely to spread from one person to another. Therefore, casual contact with an infected person is not a risk of becoming ill with cholera.

### **What are the symptoms of cholera?**

Symptoms usually appear two to three days after exposure and include sudden onset of severe watery diarrhea, occasional vomiting and cramping, and dehydration. Approximately 5% of infected persons will have severe disease with symptoms of profuse watery diarrhea, vomiting, and leg cramps. In severe untreated cases, death may occur due to dehydration from the rapid loss of body fluids. In addition to these symptoms, children infected with cholera may also experience extreme drowsiness, fever, convulsion, and

coma. Symptoms typically appear 2–3 days after exposure and can last a few hours or up to five days.

### **What is the treatment for cholera?**

Due to the rapid dehydration that may result from severe diarrhea, replacement of fluids and salts by mouth or intravenously is critical.

In addition to fluid replacement, antibiotics may also be prescribed to shorten the duration of diarrhea and the shedding of bacteria in the stool.

### **How can cholera be prevented?**

The FDA approved a single-dose live oral cholera vaccine called Vaxchora® (lyophilized CVD 103–HgR) for adults 18 – 64 years old who are traveling to an area with active transmission of the strain that most commonly causes cholera. The vaccine is not routinely recommended for most travelers from the United States. The World Health Organization has approved three other oral inactivated or non-live cholera vaccines, but these are not available in the United States.

When traveling in areas where cholera is present, follow basic precautions:

- Drink only bottled water, carbonated water, or boiled water.
- To disinfect water if tap water is the only source, boil water for 1 minute or filter and treat water with 2 drops of chlorine per liter/quart of water or use ½ an iodine tablet in water.
- Avoid drinks with ice that may have been made with untreated water.
- Wash your hands often with soap and clean water. If no soap and water are available, use an alcohol-based hand cleaner with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid uncooked vegetables or fruit. Consume fruits with intact peels that you can peel yourself (e.g., bananas and oranges).
- Avoid raw and undercooked meats, particularly seafood.
- Eat only cooked foods that are served hot.
- After cooking or boiling food and water, protect against contamination by flies.
- Avoid food and drinks from street vendors.
- Use bottled, boiled, or chemically treated water to wash dishes, brush your teeth, wash and prepare food, or make ice.
- Dispose of feces in a sanitary manner to prevent contamination of water and food sources.

## How do I get more information on cholera?

Calhoun County Public Health Department

Phone: 269-969-6383

 [www.facebook.com/CCPublicHealthDepartment/](https://www.facebook.com/CCPublicHealthDepartment/)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Phone: 800-232-4636 (800-CDC-INFO)

Website: <http://www.cdc.gov/cholera/general/>

Spanish: <https://www.who.int/es/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/cholera>

*Cholera*

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This fact sheet is meant to provide general health information and is not intended to be medical advice or otherwise take the place of your doctor's orders or to diagnose your specific health problems. Check with your doctor if you have any questions or concerns about your health.