

New Vaccine Approved for Cholera Prevention

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved Vaxchora, a vaccine for the prevention of cholera caused by serogroup 01 in adults 18 through 64 years of age traveling to cholera-affected areas.

Vaxchora is the only FDA approved vaccine for the prevention of cholera.

Cholera, a disease caused by *Vibrio cholera* bacteria, is acquired by ingesting contaminated water or food and causes a watery diarrhea that can range from mild to extremely severe. Often the infection is mild, however, severe cholera is characterized by profuse diarrhea and vomiting leading to dehydration. It is potentially life threatening if treatment with antibiotics and fluid replacement is not started immediately.

While cholera is rare in the United States, traveling to parts of the world with inadequate water and sewage treatment and poor sanitation are at risk for infection. Recent outbreaks of cholera have occurred in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Iraq, Afghanistan, and several African countries including Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, South Sudan, Mozambique and Malawi. On October 20, 2010, an outbreak of cholera was confirmed in Haiti for the first time in more than a century, ten months after the catastrophic earthquake that killed over 200,000 people and displaced over 1 million. This cholera outbreak was the worst in recent history with over 665,000 cases and 8,183 deaths. Because of the seriousness of this disease, the FDA granted the vaccine a fast track designation and priority review which allowed it to be tested and licensed in an expedited manner.

Vaxchora is a live, weakened vaccine that is taken as a single, oral liquid dose of 100 ml at least ten days before travel to a cholera affected area. The most common side effects include tiredness, headache, abdominal pain, nausea, lack of appetite and diarrhea. As with other travel vaccines, Vaxchora is available at PharmaCare. Lisa Bohrer, R.N.,BC has administered the vaccine to clients traveling to Africa. She is available for travel consults and can be contacted at 301-689-2909.

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