

New Cholera Vaccine

Cholera is a bacterial disease usually spread through contaminated food or water. Cholera causes severe diarrhea and dehydration. Cholera is an extremely virulent illness that affects both children and adults and can kill within hours if left untreated. Most people exposed to the cholera bacteria do not become ill, yet they shed the bacteria in their stool for seven to fourteen days. They can infect others through contaminated food and water.

Cholera incidence has increased steadily since the beginning of the millennium and outbreaks continue to pose a significant public health risk to indigenous populations and travelers where access to adequate water and sanitation resources are constrained. According to the World Health Organization, 3-5 million people suffer from this disease annually, with up to 200,000 deaths. Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, as well as other developing regions in the Caribbean and South America, have been particularly vulnerable to outbreaks of cholera. These regions are also prone to outbreaks following disaster situations, such as earthquakes and hurricanes, where there is disruption of water and sanitation systems or the displacement of people into overcrowded camps.

For adults traveling to cholera affected areas, a vaccine is now available in the United States. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration recently approved Vaxchora, a vaccine for the prevention of cholera. It is a liquid dose by mouth administered at least 10 days before travel. The vaccine is licensed for use in individuals 18 through 64 years of age.

If you are traveling to a cholera-endemic area, your risk of contracting the disease can be reduced by following these precautions:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water or use an alcohol based hand sanitizer.
- Drink only bottled water or water you have boiled or disinfected yourself. Use bottled water even to brush your teeth.
- Eat food that is completely cooked and hot.
- Avoid sushi as well as raw or improperly cooked fish and seafood.
- Stick to fruits and vegetables that you can peel yourself.
- Be wary of dairy foods, including ice cream, which is often contaminated, and unpasteurized milk.

For more information regarding cholera, visit www.cdc.gov.

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