



What is Cholera?

- 💧 Cholera is a diarrhoeal disease, caused by the **bacterium** *Vibrio cholerae* and has a very sudden onset. Stools look like rice water.
- 💧 Symptoms appear within 2 to 4 days after ingestion of the bacteria.
- 💧 Dehydration because of **vomiting** and **diarrhoea** are the main symptoms.
- 💧 Severe **dehydration** can be fatal, as quickly as within 6 hours, if untreated.

How is Cholera transmitted?

- 💧 By eating and drinking contaminated food or water, you can contract cholera bacteria.
- 💧 Faecal excretions into water sources introduce the bacterium into the water, where it can live for at least 3 weeks, if the water is warm, saline or alkaline.
- 💧 These bacteria can also survive in food, especially seafood.
- 💧 As much as 70% of people, who drink contaminated water, can become carriers, with little or no symptoms. These people can excrete the bacteria for up to a few weeks.

How can Cholera patients be treated?

- 💧 Rehydration by replacing water and salts are essential and the most effective treatment of cholera.
- 💧 Sports drinks with all the essential salts and minerals or a weak solution of sugar and salt can be drunk to replace lost fluids and salts.
- 💧 Vaccination against cholera offers little protection for up to 6 months, but does not prevent infection and subsequently also not transmission.
- 💧 Although antibiotics may help by shortening the duration of the diarrhoea, it will not prevent fatal dehydration, which can only be treated by rehydrating the patient orally or intra-venous with fluids.

How can Cholera be prevented?

- 💧 Do not drink untreated water and Practice proper personal hygiene.
- 💧 Disinfect the water by adding 1 teaspoon of domestic bleach to 20 litres of water and leave for at least one hour before drinking. Cloudy water can be treated with an extra 2 to 3 teaspoons of bleach. Where bleach is not available, water must be boiled for at least 3 minutes continuously. Take care of burning.
- 💧 Install and maintain sanitation infrastructure.
- 💧 Use clean water containers and prevent recontamination of stored water by refraining from inserting your hand or contaminated objects into the water.

Reference: DWAF (2003). Management of water-related microbial diseases, Vol. 1.

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