



District Health Department No. 2

Northeast Michigan's Community Health Department

Cholera

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

WHAT IS CHOLERA?

Cholera is an acute diarrheal illness caused by an infection of the intestine.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Cholera is often mild or without symptoms. However, if symptoms occur, such as often, watery diarrhea, vomiting and leg cramps, they may be severe.

HOW DOES A PERSON GET CHOLERA?

A person can get cholera by drinking water or eating food that is contaminated with the bacterium. In an outbreak, the source is often the feces of an infected individual. Cholera can also occur naturally in the environment, in such things as raw shellfish.

WHAT IS THE RISK?

In the United States, cholera has been virtually eliminated by modern sewage and water treatment systems. However, since international travel has improved, the risk is still present in persons traveling outside of the United States and then returning home with the disease.

CAN CHOLERA BE SPREAD FROM PERSON TO PERSON?

The disease is not likely to be spread from person to person. Therefore, casual contact with an infected individual does not put a person at risk for becoming infected. The main source of infection is through contaminated water or food. One would have to drink contaminated water or food to contract the disease.

IS THERE A VACCINE AVAILABLE OR A WAY TO PREVENT THE DISEASE?

Currently, the manufacture and sale of the only licensed cholera vaccine in the United States has been discontinued. The best way to avoid infection, especially when traveling outside of the United States is to drink only water that has been boiled and food that has been thoroughly cooked.

For more information on Cholera, please visit the Center's for Disease Control website at www.cdc.gov or call District Health Department #2 at 1-800-504-2650.