



**ZAMBIAN OPEN UNIVERSITY**

**Workplace**

**Cholera**

**Awareness and Prevention Guide**

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**ZAOU Health Living Information Sharing Members**

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## What is Cholera?

Cholera is a secretory diarrhoeal bacterial disease which affects the small intestines. It is caused by gram-negative bacterium *Vibrio Cholerae*. Cholera is an epidemic diarrhoeal disease which is a public health problem with a potential to spread quickly and cause deaths. It is highly contagious. Cholera is characterized by sudden onset of profuse painless watery diarrhoea, occasional vomiting, rapid dehydration, acidosis and circulatory collapse. The affected person loses a lot of water and salt leading to dehydration.

## Incubation Period

Cholera has an extremely short incubation period (2-5 days). It is sporadic and spreads very fast. *Vibrio Cholerae* can stay in faecal matter for 7-14 days and shed back in the environment and affect other people. Cholera affects children and adults and can die within a few hours when contracted. People with low immunity are at greater risk such as malnourished and people living with HIV/AIDS.

## Causes

- A gram-negative bacilli comma shaped, *Vibrio Cholerae*
- Can survive at freezing point
- Can survive in variety of foodstuff and water up to 5 days in normal temperature and up to 10 days at 5-10 degrees centigrade.
- Can survive in a fly for up to 14 days
- Can be destroyed by irradiation and heat above 70 degrees centigrade
- Sensitive to acidity and drying
- Up to 1-million *Vibrio Cholerae* needed to cause disease.

## Risk Factors of Cholera in a Workplace Environment

Transmission of *Vibrio cholera* can occur in the following direct and indirect ways:

- Ingestion of contaminated water





- Ingestion of contaminated food.
- Being in contact with faecal matter from an infected person.



- Insects like flies and cockroaches
- Ingesting contaminated raw fruits and vegetables, especially those grown by



irrigation with waste-water (sewerage garden) ; and when fruits and vegetables are eaten raw.

- Ingesting inadequately cooked fish and sea food.
- Dirty hands.
- Dirty surfaces
- Inadequate sanitation
- Recent heavy rains and flooding

### **Key Messages**

- Cholera is transmitted through contaminated water or food.
- Prevention and preparedness of cholera require a multi-sectoral approach.
- Cholera can rapidly lead to severe dehydration and death if left untreated.

### **How Cholera Spreads**

- Cholera is spread when faeces from infected person get into water or food that other people eat.
- Being in contact with contaminated faecal matter.
- Handling food with contaminated hands.

## **Signs and Symptoms**

- Watery diarrhoea is the most common symptom which can lead to dehydration and serious conditions if not treated. The secretion looks like cloudy rice water.
- Vomiting
- Feeling thirsty
- Dehydration
- Weakness, exhaustion and restlessness
- Stop urinating.
- Dry mouth
- Low blood pressure
- People with severe cholera attack develop cramps in the stomach, arms and legs

## **Preventive Measures In work places**

### **Drink and Use Safe Water**



- Safe water is that which is boiled or treated with chlorine.
- Use safe water for drinking and washing hands.
- Always clean containers of water and drinks before opening to drink their contents.
- Use treated boiled for making hot beverages, i.e. tea, cocoa, etc. Bring water to the boil for 1 minute.
- Always store treated water in a clean, covered container.

### **Eat Safe Food**

- Eat food from known safe sources such as your own home.

- Eat food fruits that have natural protective coverings e.g. oranges and



bananas.



- Keep cooked food in covered containers to avoid flies, cockroaches and dust.
- Reheat stored food until hot.
- Avoid prepared food items from canteens or nearby shops.
- Dairy products such as milk, ice creams and cheese must be avoided. Ensure that milk is health treated if it is to be consumed.
- Wash hands often with soap and safe water to prevent cholera from getting into food.
- Store food in a refrigerator.

### Observance of Hygiene



- Observe personal cleanliness.
- Wash your hands using treated water with antibacterial wash soap.
- Use sanitizers for hand rubbing.
- Use clean toilets cleaned using household bleaches
- Keep nails short and pay attention to them when washing your hands – most microbes on hands come from beneath the fingernails.
- Always wash your hands after handling papers and any other office items.

### Key Messages

- Wash Hands Often with Soap and Safe Water
  - Before eating or preparing food.

- After using the latrine or toilet.
- After nursing someone with diarrhoea.
- Practise safe disposal of excreta to reduce the risk of cholera.
  - Use toilets and practice good hygiene or any other sanitation systems.

### **Initial Remedy**

Home Remedy is just adjunct treatment (an aid).

- Take oral rehydration solution (ORS).
- Go immediately to the nearest health facility, meanwhile continue drinking ORS.
- Cholera cases must be treated immediately.
- Delayed treatment or inadequate, can shortly result into death from dehydration and circulatory collapse.

### **Key Messages**

- Handwashing with soap and safe water is one way to prevent the spread of cholera.
- Soap helps remove dirt and cholera germs from hands.
- People can help protect themselves by washing their hands often.
- Eat well cooked food, keep it covered, eat it hot and peel fruits and vegetables.
- Avoid raw foods other than fruits and vegetables.

**Together, we can stop the spread of cholera**

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