PUBLIC FACT SHEET

CHOLERA

CHOLERA

What is cholera?

Cholera is an acute, life-threatening illness that primarily affects the large intestine. While symptoms generally begin within 1 to 3 days after exposure to the cholera bacteria, they can begin within hours. The bacteria are spread through contaminated food or water. Symptoms include severe, watery diarrhea, vomiting, and abdominal cramps. These symptoms can cause dehydration and death if left untreated.

Who can develop cholera?

Cholera is most commonly seen in people who have been exposed to contaminated water or food, especially in areas with poor sanitation. However, cholera can also be spread through person-to-person contact, such as through respiratory droplets or skin contact with infected water.

What are the signs and symptoms of cholera?

The signs and symptoms of cholera can include:

- Severe, watery diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal cramps
- Dehydration

If left untreated, cholera can be fatal within 24 hours.

How is cholera treated?

Cholera is treated with rehydration therapy, which can include oral rehydration solutions or intravenous fluids. Antibiotics may also be prescribed to help clear the bacteria from the body.

What can you do to prevent cholera?

To prevent the spread of cholera, it is important to:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water
- Avoid eating food or drinking water that has not been properly cleaned or cooked
- Cover your mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing
- Avoid close contact with people who have cholera

By taking these steps, you can help prevent the spread of cholera and protect yourself and others from getting sick.

For more information on cholera, including facts, symptoms, and prevention, please visit the CDC and World Health Organization websites.