



## CHOLERA FACT SHEET

### WHAT IS CHOLERA?

Cholera infection is caused by the bacteria *Vibrio cholerae* and is rare in the United States.

### HOW DO YOU GET CHOLERA?

- A person can get cholera by drinking water or eating food contaminated with the cholera bacterium.
- The source of the contamination is usually the feces of an infected person.
- The disease can spread rapidly in areas with poor treatment of sewage and drinking water.
- The cholera bacterium may also live in the environment in salt rivers and coastal waters. Shellfish eaten raw have been a source of cholera.
- The disease is not likely to spread directly from one person to another.

### SYMPTOMS

Cholera infection is often mild or without symptoms, but can sometimes be severe. Approximately one in ten (5-10%) infected persons will have severe disease with profuse watery diarrhea, vomiting, and leg cramps. Symptoms typically appear in 2-3 days after infection.

### TREATMENT

Cholera can be simply and successfully treated by immediate replacement of the fluid and salts lost through diarrhea (hydration). Antibiotics shorten the course and reduce the severity of the illness. Seek medical attention promptly and discuss treatment options with your doctor.

### PREVENTION

All people (visitors or residents) in areas where cholera is occurring or has occurred should note the following recommendations:

- Drink only bottled, boiled, or chemically treated water and bottled or canned carbonated beverages. Avoid tap water, fountain drinks, and ice cubes.
- Wash your hands often with soap and clean water. If no water and soap are available, use an alcohol-based hand cleaner (with at least 60% alcohol). Clean your hands especially before you eat or prepare food and after using the bathroom.
- Use bottled, boiled, or chemically treated water to wash dishes, brush your teeth, wash and prepare food, or make ice.
- Eat foods that are packaged or that are freshly cooked and served hot. Do not eat raw and undercooked meats and seafood or unpeeled fruits and vegetables.
- Dispose of feces in a sanitary manner to prevent contamination of water and food sources.

### DGHD EFFORTS

Reports of suspected and confirmed cases of disease are made to the Delaware General Health District (DGHD). The DGHD investigates potential sources of illness, conducts surveillance for the spread of disease, and engages in community outreach and education.