

Cholera Vaccine: What You Need to Know

Many Vaccine Information Statements are available in Spanish and other languages. See www.immunize.org/vis

Hojas de información sobre vacunas están disponibles en español y en muchos otros idiomas. Visite www.immunize.org/vis

1 Why get vaccinated?

Cholera vaccine can prevent cholera.

Cholera is spread through contaminated food or water. It is not usually spread directly from person to person, but it can be spread through contact with the feces of an infected person. Cholera causes severe diarrhea and vomiting. If it isn't treated quickly, it can lead to dehydration and even death.

Cholera is a risk mostly to people traveling to countries where the disease is common (Haiti, and parts of Africa, Asia, and the Pacific). While it is rare in the United States, cholera has also occurred among people eating raw or undercooked seafood from the Gulf Coast.

Besides being vaccinated, it is important to be careful about what you eat and drink while traveling and practice good personal hygiene to help prevent waterborne and foodborne diseases, including cholera.

2 Cholera vaccine

The cholera vaccine used in the United States is an oral (swallowed) vaccine. Only one dose is needed. Booster doses are not recommended at this time.

Most travelers do not need cholera vaccine. If you are an adult 18 through 64 years old traveling to an area where people are getting infected with cholera, your health care provider might recommend the vaccine for you.

Cholera vaccine is not 100% effective against cholera and does not protect from other foodborne or waterborne diseases. Cholera vaccine is not a substitute for being careful about what you eat or drink.

3 Talk with your health care provider

Tell your vaccine provider if the person getting the vaccine:

- Has had an **allergic reaction after a previous dose of cholera vaccine**, or has any **severe, life-threatening allergies**.
- Is **pregnant or breastfeeding**, or thinks she might be pregnant.
- Has a **weakened immune system** or has close contacts (e.g., household contacts) with a weakened immune system.
- Has **recently taken antibiotics**.
- Is **taking anti-malaria drugs**, or plans to start taking them in the next 10 days.

In some cases, your health care provider may decide to postpone cholera vaccination to a future visit.

People with minor illnesses, such as a cold, may be vaccinated. People who are moderately or severely ill should usually wait until they recover before getting cholera vaccine.

Your health care provider can give you more information.

Always wash your hands thoroughly after using the bathroom and before preparing or handling food. Cholera vaccine is a live, attenuated (weakened) vaccine which can be shed in stool for at least 7 days.



4 Risks of a vaccine reaction

- Tiredness, headache, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, lack of appetite, and diarrhea can happen after cholera vaccine.

As with any medicine, there is a very remote chance of a vaccine causing a severe allergic reaction, other serious injury, or death.

5 What if there is a serious problem?

An allergic reaction could occur after the vaccinated person leaves the clinic. If you see signs of a severe allergic reaction (hives, swelling of the face and throat, difficulty breathing, a fast heartbeat, dizziness, or weakness), call **9-1-1** and get the person to the nearest hospital.

For other signs that concern you, call your health care provider.

Adverse reactions should be reported to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). Your health care provider will usually file this report, or you can do it yourself. Visit the VAERS website at www.vaers.hhs.gov or call **1-800-822-7967**. *VAERS is only for reporting reactions, and VAERS staff do not give medical advice.*

6 How can I learn more?

- Ask your health care provider.
- Call your local or state health department.
- Contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
 - Call **1-800-232-4636 (1-800-CDC-INFO)** or
 - Visit CDC's cholera website at www.cdc.gov/cholera

