

HealthFAX

Increased Cholera Activity in Mexico, Cuba, Dominican Republic and Haiti

Attention: **All Physicians, Walk-In Clinics, Emergency Departments, Infection Control Practitioners, Nurse Practitioners**

Date: Nov 13, 2013

On November 8, 2013, the Public Health Agency of Canada released an updated travel health notice regarding the increased cholera activity in Mexico, Cuba, Dominican Republic and Haiti.

The updated document can be found at:

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/tmp-pmv/notices-avis/notices-avis-eng.php?id=111>

People usually become infected with cholera bacteria (*Vibrio cholera*) from drinking or eating contaminated water or food. It is associated with watery diarrhea and rapid dehydration, which can be life-threatening. The Public Health Agency of Canada recommends practicing safe food and water precautions while in Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti or Mexico

Cholera should be suspected in travelers returning from endemic areas with symptoms of acute watery diarrhea with onset <5 days after return. Management of cholera includes rehydration and good hygiene. Adjunctive antibiotics are recommended for severe cases. Stool specimens must specifically request "cholera" and should be submitted in usual transport media for stool C&S.

Report all suspect and confirmed cases of cholera to your public health department.

Laboratory Information

Who to test	Individuals who have profuse watery diarrhea <5 days after returning from a region with known cholera
Specimen type	Stool
Specimen container	Stool culture containers with usual (Cary-Blair) transport media
Requisition requirements	Must specify "Cholera" or "Vibrio cholerae" on requisition
Laboratory submission	Submit specimen to regular laboratory. Stool specimens will be forwarded to the Public Health Laboratories (PHL) for testing
Urgent requests	Must be communicated directly to the PHL at 416-526-5441 prior to submitting specimen
Tests not available	Serology, rapid stool tests
Other considerations	Other bacterial, viral and parasitic causes of acute diarrhea should be considered. Testing should be performed as per routine practices.

Additional information on cholera:

1. Public Health Agency of Canada: <http://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/diseases/cholera>
2. Public Health Agency of Canada Pathogen Safety Data Sheet:
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/lab-bio/res/psds-ftss/vibrio-cholerae-eng.php>
3. Public Health Ontario: Cholera information for clinicians:
<http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/eRepository/Vibrio%20cholera%20clinical%20guidelines%20final%203.pdf>

Cholera is a reportable disease. If you suspect a case or have questions regarding proper specimen collection, please contact the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit Communicable Disease Team at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 Ext. 8809. After Hours please call 1-888-225-7851