

# Cholera Vaccine:

## What You Need to Know

Many vaccine information statements are available in Spanish and other languages. See [www.immunize.org/vis](http://www.immunize.org/vis)

Hojas de información sobre vacunas están disponibles en español y en muchos otros idiomas. Visite [www.immunize.org/vis](http://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 (Americas including Hispaniola, parts of Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia). 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 follow these five basic steps if you are going to an area where cholera is present:

- Drink and use safe water.
- Wash your hands often with soap and safe water.
- Use toilets when possible. If toilets are not available, bury feces at least 100 feet away from any body of water, including wells.
- Peel raw fruits and vegetables and cook other food thoroughly.
- Clean up safely. Thoroughly clean toilets and other surfaces that might be contaminated with feces.

### 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.

**Most travelers do not need cholera vaccine.**

Cholera vaccine is recommended for people 2 through 64 years of age who are traveling to an area where people are getting infected with cholera.

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.

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

### 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 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 oral typhoid vaccine**.
- 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.



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## 4. Risks of a vaccine reaction

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- 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.

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## 5. What if there is a serious problem?

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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](http://www.vaers.hhs.gov) or call **1-800-822-7967**. *VAERS is only for reporting reactions, and VAERS staff do not give medical advice.*

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## 6. How can I learn more?

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- Ask your health care provider.
- Call your local or state health department.
- Visit the website of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for vaccine package inserts and additional information at [www.fda.gov/vaccines-blood-biologics/vaccines](http://www.fda.gov/vaccines-blood-biologics/vaccines).
- 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](http://www.cdc.gov/cholera)

