



Wheeling-Ohio County Health Department

The Wheeling-Ohio County Health Department is now offering the new cholera vaccine **Vaxchora** through the department's Travel Vaccination Clinic. The Department's Travel Vaccination Clinic offers vaccinations to assist travelers during international travel.

Vaxchora is a vaccine against some of the bacteria that causes cholera (*Vibrio cholerae* serogroup O1). It is the best line of defense against cholera infection, providing significant protection against cholera. The vaccine is recommended for adult travelers 18 to 64 years old going to cholera affected regions.

Cholera is a disease spread by drinking water or eating food contaminated with cholera bacteria. Severe cholera is characterized by large amounts of watery diarrhea, often described as "rice-water stool" because it can have a pale, milky appearance. It can also be accompanied by nausea and vomiting. If untreated, the loss of fluid can be deadly. But simple treatment, including replacing lost body fluids, can lower the risk of death to less than 1%.

A person is at risk for cholera if he or she eats food or drinks water contaminated with cholera bacteria. Cholera is extremely rare in the United States and other industrialized nations, but cases continue to occur in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, along with parts of Africa and Asia. Travelers to countries where cholera is a risk very rarely get cholera because they do not typically visit areas with cholera outbreaks and have better access to safe food and water. Travelers may be at higher risk if they are visiting friends and family in an outbreak area or working in high-risk settings (such as refugee camps or cholera treatment centers). These travelers may also be at higher risk because they stay longer or have less access to safe food and water.

Because it is spread through contaminated food and water, cholera is easily prevented by sticking to safe eating and drinking habits and regularly washing hands.

The newly licensed cholera vaccine Vaxchora, from the PaxVax Corporation, is available in the United States, and is recommended by CDC for adults traveling to areas with active cholera transmission; most people do not travel to areas of active cholera transmission. Vaxchora prevents severe diarrhea caused by the most common type of cholera bacteria. Avoiding unsafe food and water can also prevent many cholera infections. Travelers should consider the following questions:

- How common is cholera where I am going?
- How common is cholera in travelers to this area?
- What would put me at risk for cholera?
- Will I be able to receive rapid treatment (if needed) at my destination?

The key to treating cholera is to replace lost body fluids (rehydration). Antibiotics can shorten the length of illness and help prevent loss of fluids (dehydration) in people with cholera. If you are seriously ill and think you may have cholera, visit a health care provider immediately and tell him or her about where you have recently traveled.

The following countries have areas with cholera. However, it's important to remember that most cholera is spread in limited outbreaks, and travelers are rarely at risk.

- **Africa:** Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia
- **Asia:** Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Iraq, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Yemen
- **Americas:** Dominican Republic, Haiti

Vaxchora is a live, attenuated vaccine. This means the cholera strains within the vaccine produce an incomplete, nontoxic version of the toxin. The body responds to this safe version of cholera and creates an immunity to the infection. Vaxchora is a single-dose oral cholera vaccine. This means it is just one dose taken by mouth, versus multiple doses in similar products. It should be administered at least 10 days before potential cholera exposure, essentially 10 days prior to a trip. The vaccine is in a powdered form, which is reconstituted in water. Clients should consume the vaccine in-office with the guidance and instruction of a healthcare professional. If you are receiving the cholera vaccine, do not eat or drink for at least 60 minutes before and after your appointment.

Travel immunizations and health information for foreign travel are available by appointment only through the travel clinic. Charges for immunizations vary and are subject to change. For information or appointments please call **(304) 234-3682**.