

United Nations Medical Directors

Cholera Risk Mitigation Plan

January 2026

- The following occupational health recommendations are provided by the UN Medical Directors to all Organizations and UN personnel in order to reduce the risk of UN personnel and their dependents from contracting cholera.
- Cholera caused by *Vibrio cholerae* results in acute watery diarrhea. See WHO fact sheet for more information: [Cholera](#)
- These recommendations should be applied to UN personnel deploying to or residing in cholera-affected countries/areas.
- Please take into account local health authorities /WHO guidance and regulation when implementing these recommendations.
- Please contact dos-dhmosh-public-health@un.org for any questions or clarification on this document.

Risk Categories	UN Medical Directors Recommendations
1 All UN personnel travelling into or residing in a cholera-affected country/area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drink and use only safe water.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Piped water sources, tap water, drinks sold in cups or bags, or ice cubes <u>may NOT be safe</u> and should be boiled or treated with chlorine.○ Use only safe water to brush your teeth, wash and prepare food, and to make ice.○ Information on infection prevention and WASH recommendations is available here : WHO Watery Diarrhea WASH /IPC Guide• To be sure water is safe to drink and use, boil it or treat it with a chlorine product.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ If boiling, bring your water to a complete boil for at least 1 minute.○ To treat your water with chlorine, use one of the locally available treatment products and follow the instructions.○ Always store your treated water in a clean, covered container.

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All UN personnel travelling into or residing in a cholera-affected country/area

- **Wash your hands frequently with soap and safe water**
- **Cook food well, keep it covered, eat it hot, and peel fruits and vegetables.**
 - Avoid raw foods other than fruits and vegetables you have peeled yourself.
 - Be sure to cook seafood, especially shellfish, until it is very hot all the way through.
- **Use a latrine or bury your faeces, do not defecate in any body/course of water.**
- **Know what to do if you or your family are ill with diarrhoea, including:**
 - If you have oral rehydration solution (ORS), start taking it now; it can save your life.
 - Go immediately to the nearest health facility. Continue to drink ORS at home and while you travel to get treatment.
 - Continue to breastfeed your baby if they have watery diarrhea, even when traveling to get treatment.

2 UN personnel who are pregnant

- There is no evidence that pregnant women, at any stage of pregnancy, are at greater risk of being infected with *Vibrio cholerae* than the general population.
- However, it is well established, that cholera during pregnancy increases risk of pregnancy loss and maternal death.
- See here for more information for considerations for pregnant UN personnel who have contracted cholera: [gtfcc-interim-technical-note-treatment-of-cholera-in-pregnant-women-1.pdf](#)
- In the case of pregnant personnel, any decision to recommend cholera vaccination should be made by UN Medical Services on a case-by-case basis following an individual risk assessment and in line with WHO guidance. See Risk Category 4 below for more information.

3 Any UN Health Workers

- Only two serogroups, O1 and O139, cause cholera outbreaks. See Cholera outbreak toolkit for case definitions and other key documents: [Cholera Outbreak Toolbox](#)
- **Signs and Symptoms:** UN health workers should be familiar with the signs and symptoms of cholera.
 - Cholera can cause severe acute watery diarrhea, which can be fatal within hours if untreated.
 - Most people infected with *V. cholerae* do not develop symptoms but can spread the bacteria through their faeces for 1–10 days. Symptoms appear 12 hours to 5 days after infection.
 - Most people with the disease have mild or moderate symptoms. A minority of patients develop severe acute watery diarrhea and life-threatening dehydration
 - See the [WHO Cholera facts](#) for more information on signs and symptoms
- **Cholera diagnosis** (e.g. rapid diagnostic testing (RDT), clinical diagnosis). See here for information on RDT: [Rapid Diagnostic Test \(RDT\) for cholera detection – GTFCC](#).
- **Clinical management:** UN health workers should be familiar with the clinical management of cholera, namely that it is treatable with prompt administration of oral rehydration solution (ORS). The following link contains job aids for clinical management: [Clinical Job Aids – GTFCC](#)
- Individuals with severe dehydration should be treated with intravenous fluids together with ORS and antibiotics
- Community access to ORS is also essential during a cholera outbreak.
- There is no evidence that mass administration of antibiotics prevents cholera, and chemoprophylaxis is not recommended.
- UN health workers should ensure strict application of infection prevention and control (IPC) measures and appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE). See : here : [WHO Watery Diarrhea WASH /IPC Guide](#)
- Suspected or confirmed cholera cases should be reported immediately through established medical and public health reporting channels.

4 Any UN personnel conducting/will be conducting emergency/relief work in a cholera-affected country/area

- Implement all of the preventive measures mentioned above, plus
- Seek advice from your medical practitioner, UN physician or your Organization's Medical Services to assess your personal risk, and how to mitigate it.

AND

Vaccination Requirements

- Seek advice from your medical practitioner/your organization, and depending on your risk, cholera vaccination may be recommended (e.g. directly exposed to cholera patients, exposed to contaminated water/food).
- Oral cholera vaccine is **not a substitute** for WASH and is used **selectively for high-risk exposure**.
- The decision to recommend vaccination should be made by your organization or local health authority in accordance with WHO guidance and the operational risk context.

References:

- WHO [Cholera](#) factsheet [Cholera | Cholera | CDC](#)
- [Water, sanitation and hygiene and infection prevention and control measures for infectious diarrhoea in health-care settings: operational guide](#)
- [Guidelines & technical documents – GTFCC](#)