



Traveller's Diarrhea and Cholera Vaccine

Travel vaccines are recommended for people travelling to or working in some countries. It is important to talk to your doctor or visit a travel clinic at least 6 to 8 weeks before you leave on a trip. There is a charge for most travel vaccines.

Bring a record of all vaccines you have received in the past to the travel clinic. It is especially important to keep a record of the travel vaccines you receive and take this with you on your trip.

What is traveller's diarrhea and cholera vaccine?

The vaccine protects against traveller's diarrhea and cholera, infections caused by two types of bacteria. The vaccine is approved by Health Canada.

The vaccine will give you **some** protection against these diseases. However, it is also very important to have good personal hygiene and to take food and drink precautions. For more information see HealthLink BC File [#41a Health Advice for Travellers](#).

Who should get the vaccine?

Persons travelling to or working in Central and South America, the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, Africa, and Eastern or Southern Europe may need to get the vaccine. The travel clinic doctor or nurse will advise if you should receive the vaccine. A booster dose may be required if you continue to travel or work in these areas.

For protection from traveller's diarrhea:

Adults and children 2 years of age and older are given two doses of oral vaccine (by

mouth) to take at home. A booster dose may be required every 3 months.

For protection from cholera:

Adults and children over 6 years of age are given two doses of vaccine to take at home. A booster dose may be required every two years.

Children 2 to 6 years of age are given three doses of vaccine to take at home. A booster dose may be required every six months.

The vaccine offers protection about a week after taking the last dose.

The travel clinic will provide instructions on how to take the vaccine at home. **It is important to follow the instructions.**

Possible Reactions after the Vaccine

Reactions are usually mild and temporary. The most common reactions are stomach pain, diarrhea, nausea and vomiting.

Acetaminophen or Tylenol[®] can be given for fever or soreness. ASA or Aspirin[®] should NOT be given to anyone under 20 years of age due to the risk of Reye Syndrome.

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine because there is an extremely rare possibility of a life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. This may include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. If this happens after you leave the clinic, call 911 or the local emergency number.

This reaction can be treated, and occurs in less than one in a million people who get the vaccine.

Report serious or unexpected reactions to your public health nurse or doctor.

Who should not get the vaccine?

Speak with a travel clinic doctor or nurse if you:

- have a history of a life-threatening reaction to a previous dose of cholera vaccine, or any component of the vaccine including saccharin
- currently have a fever or stomach illness.

Children under 2 years of age should not receive the vaccine.

What is traveller's diarrhea?

Traveller's diarrhea is frequent, loose, or watery bowel movements usually from eating or drinking contaminated foods or fluids. Symptoms may also include stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, bloating and feeling unwell. Symptoms can begin suddenly and last three to five days.

The most common cause of traveller's diarrhea is food or water contaminated with bacteria called enterotoxigenic *E. coli* (ETEC). These bacteria are found in the bowel movements (stool) of infected people. People who use the bathroom without proper handwashing can pass the bacteria on to others through food preparation or hand-to-mouth contact. Food can also be contaminated when stool is used as fertilizer, or when contaminated water is used for "freshening" vegetables in market stalls.

What is cholera?

Cholera is a serious, and sometimes life-threatening, infection caused by the bacteria *Vibrio cholerae*. Persons who have been

infected may have no symptoms or only mild diarrhea. However, others can develop very severe, watery diarrhea and vomiting. Without treatment, this can lead to severe dehydration and death.

Like ETEC, cholera bacteria are also found in the stool of infected people and the disease is spread in the same way. In addition, cholera bacteria can live in the water of certain coastal areas, and the disease can be spread by eating raw or undercooked seafood and shellfish.

Mature Minor Consent

Effort is made to seek parental or guardian consent prior to immunization. Children under the age of 19 who are able to understand the risks and benefits may consent to or refuse immunizations, regardless of the parent's or guardian's wishes. It is recommended that parents/guardians and their minor children discuss immunizations beforehand, and ask the nurse or doctor any questions.

For more HealthLink BC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles/index.stm or your local public health unit.

Click on www.HealthLinkBC.ca or call 8-1-1 for non-emergency health information and services in B.C.

For deaf and hearing-impaired assistance, call 7-1-1 in B.C.

Translation services are available in more than 130 languages on request.