



American Citizen Services Unit
U.S. Embassy Santo Domingo
Warden Message



TO: American Citizens and Consular Wardens

FROM: American Citizens Services Unit

DATE: October 22, 2010

SUBJECT: Cholera Outbreak in the Artibonite Region of Haiti

The U.S. Embassy in Santo Domingo is issuing this Warden Message to alert U.S. citizens that The Ministry of Health in Haiti has issued a statement that the diarrhea outbreak in the Artibonite region is due to cholera.

Cholera is an acute, diarrheal illness caused by infection of the intestine with the bacterium *Vibrio cholera*. The infection is generally mild or without symptoms, but can sometimes be severe. Common symptoms may include watery diarrhea, vomiting, and leg cramps. The most important treatment is rehydration, which can almost always be accomplished with general oral rehydration and special oral rehydration solutions designed to be rapidly absorbed from the intestine.

A person can become infected with cholera by drinking contaminated water or eating contaminated food. Since the source of contamination is usually feces of an infected person, the disease can spread rapidly in areas with inadequate treatment of sewage and drinking water. There is no cholera vaccine currently available in the USA, and vaccination is not generally recommended. Antibiotics are generally not indicated. Although diarrhea can be dramatic, leading to dehydration and shock, the U.S. Government has not experienced any significant cholera illnesses despite our people being stationed in endemic areas, e.g., Bangladesh.

American citizens are advised to avoid the Artibonite area and should monitor media coverage to stay abreast of the situation as it develops. U.S. citizens are also advised to maintain an increased level of vigilance when traveling in and around Port-au-Prince.

No tap water should be considered safe. Drink canned, boxed, or commercially bottled carbonated water and drinks. Eat foods that are well-cooked and served steaming hot. For more information about health precautions for travelers see the Centers for Disease Control website at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/haiti.aspx> . For more detailed information on the situation in Haiti, please visit the U.S. Embassy Port-au-Prince website at <http://haiti.usembassy.gov/warden-messages-2010.html>

American citizens traveling or residing overseas are encouraged to register with the appropriate U.S. Embassy or Consulate on the State Department's travel registration website at <https://travelregistration.state.gov>.

The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy is located at the corner of Cesar Nicolas Penson Street and Maximo Gomez Avenue, in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; the ACS Unit's fax number is 809-689-6142; the e-mail address is accsantodom@state.gov; and the website is <http://santodomingo.usembassy.gov/acs-e.html>. For any emergencies involving American citizens out of regular business hours or over the weekends, please call 809-221-2171 and ask to speak to the duty officer.