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### **CHOLERA: Health Care Information**

**Signs and Symptoms:** May be mildly symptomatic to severe with sudden onset. Vomiting, headache, intestinal cramping with little or no fever is rapidly followed by painless voluminous diarrhea. Fluid losses may exceed 5 to 10 liters per day. Without treatment, death may result from severe dehydration, hypovolemia and shock.

**Incubation Period:** 4 hours to 5 days; the average is 2 to 3 days.

**Diagnosis:** Classic description is “rice water” diarrhea and dehydration. Microscopic exam of stool samples reveals few or no red or white cells. Bacteria (*Vibrio*) may be identified by dark field or phase contrast microscopy.

**Treatment:** Fluid and electrolyte replacement. Antibiotics (Tetracycline, Ciprofloxacin or Erythromycin) may shorten the duration of diarrhea and reduce shedding of the organism.

**Isolation and Decontamination:** Use standard precautions for health care workers. Personal contact rarely causes infection; however, enteric precautions and careful hand washing should be employed. Bactericidal solutions (hypochlorite) would provide adequate decontamination.