

Current major events

Increased Cholera Activities in EMR

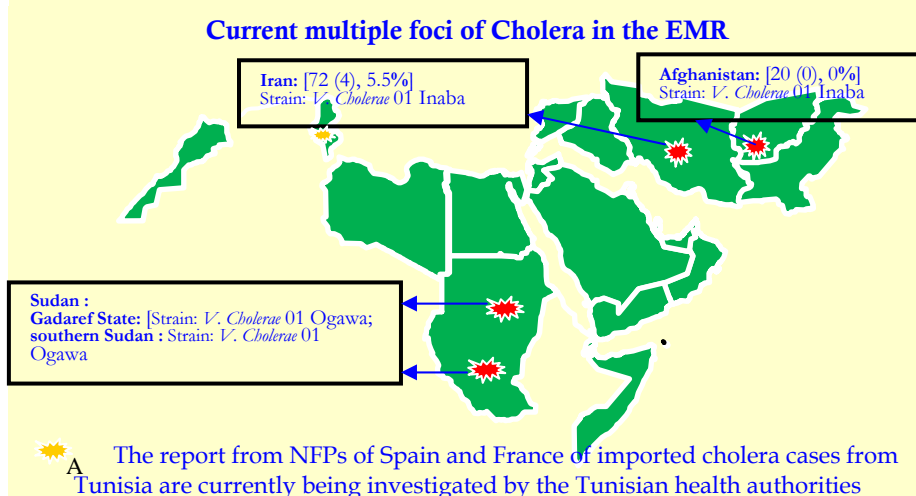
A number of countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) have reported cases of cholera to WHO in recent time. In Sudan, more than 100 cases in the last two months including 2 deaths (CFR: 2%) were reported from Gederef State of eastern Sudan. Meanwhile, over 8,703 cases of Acute watery diarrhoea/cholera, including 57 deaths (CFR: 0.65%) were reported from southern Sudan since January 2008.

Iran has reported 72 cases of cholera including 4 deaths (CFR: 5.5%) between 7 June to 14 August 2008. Afghanistan, on the other hand, has also reported 20 cholera cases so far; the first case reported in mid-August. In another development, the International Health Regulations 2005 (IHR) National Focal Points (NFP) of Spain and France have, each, reported laboratory confirmed case of *V. cholerae* in travelers returning from Tunisia which is currently under investigation by the health authorities of Tunisia.

Editorial note

Current ongoing outbreaks of cholera clearly demonstrate that the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) remains extremely vulnerable to outbreaks of epidemic-prone diarrhoeal diseases. In many countries in the EMR, environmental problems, including inadequate sanitation and contaminated food and water, expose populations to the risk of diarrhoeal diseases. This situation is more pronounced in the countries which are facing some of the worse humanitarian crises. In addition to human suffering and serious public health problems, these diseases have a severe social and economic impact on the affected countries.

Iraq continues to report increasing number of cases of acute watery diarrhoea. Last year's cholera outbreak in Iraq was reported in the summer month of August. The current increase in the number of cases of acute watery diarrhoea should raise concern over the possibility of yet another outbreak this year. The Ministry of Health and all health partners



What should travelers do to avoid getting cholera?

When simple precautions are observed, contracting the disease is unlikely. Travelers should drink only boiled water or water treated with chlorine or iodine. Other safe beverages include tea and coffee made with boiled water and carbonated, bottled beverages with no ice. They should eat only foods that have been thoroughly cooked and are still hot; peel fruit themselves, avoid undercooked or raw fish or shellfish, including ceviche, salads; and avoid foods and beverages from street vendors.

must increase their vigilance to avoid a repeat of last year's crisis.

This week, the IHR national focal points of both Spain and France have reported two separate laboratory confirmed cases of cholera, allegedly imported from Tunisia. The Ministry of Health, Tunisia is currently investigating these alerts. Tunisia last reported cases of cholera in 1973 where 656 cases were reported.

Since implementation of IHR 2005 in June 2005, the WHO regional offices of EMRO and EURO are working closely and coordinating the communication links between State Parties. This is the second time that the two regions work together on such cross border outbreak verification/investigations involving countries in their respective regions. Last year the two Regions closed worked out the dynamics of an outbreak of haemolytic uremic syndrome involving a group of Italian tourists.

Update on outbreaks

in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

CCHF: in Afghanistan, **Dengue:** in Saudi Arabia. **Cholera:** in Iran, Afghanistan. **Hepatitis –E:** in Red sea state of Sudan

Current public health events of international concern

[cumulative N° of cases (deaths), CFR %]

Avian influenza

Egypt	[50 (22), 44%]
Indonesia	[135 (110), 81.4%]

AWD/Cholera

Sudan (Gedaref)	[100 (2), 2%]
Iran	[72 (4), 5.5%]
Afghanistan	[20(0), 0.0%]

Dengue fever

Saudi Arabia	[533 (?), ?%]
Yemen	[1001 (?), ?%]

Hepatitis E

Uganda	[6530 (104), 1.6%]
Sudan	[224(23), 10.2%]*

VHF

DRC Congo	[5 (4), 80%]
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Yellow fever

Cote d' Ivoire	[2(0), 0%]
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Crimean Congo H. Fever

Afghanistan	[10(4), 40%]
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(* = Unofficial figures)
CFR = Case-Fatality Rate