How are cholera patients treated?

- Although cholera can be life-threatening, people can get well if they immediately take fluids and salts to replace those they have lost through diarrhoea and vomiting. We call this oral rehydration.
- It is essential to rehydrate by replacing water and salts. This is the most effective treatment for cholera.
- Sports drinks with all the essential salts and minerals or a weak solution of sugar and salt can be drunk to replace lost fluids and salts. You can also buy a pre-packaged mixture of sugar and salts. Mix this with water and give it to the patient in large amounts. You can also make the mixture yourself as follows:
  - Add eight teaspoons of sugar and half a teaspoon of salt to one litre of clean water.
  - Give this as often as possible to anyone who has diarrhoea.
- Very sick people should immediately be put on a drip to quickly replace lost fluid.

How can cholera be prevented?

- Do not drink untreated water and practise personal hygiene.
- Disinfect water by adding one teaspoon of domestic bleach to 20 litres of water. Leave for at least one hour before drinking. Cloudy water can be treated with an extra two to three teaspoons of bleach.
- Where bleach is not available, water must be boiled continuously for at least three minutes.
- Install and maintain sanitation infrastructure.
- Use clean water containers. Do not insert your hand or contaminated objects into the stored water. If you live in an area that is threatened by cholera, you can follow a few simple rules to protect yourself:
  - Wash your hands after using the toilet and before working with food.
  - Rinse or cook food properly.
  - Use clean water.
  - Install a VIP toilet or get rid of faeces in a safe way.

If there are cholera bacteria in the water in your area, purify the water for home use. You can make water safe by boiling it thoroughly or by making a solution of 25 litres of water and one teaspoon of Jik or other bleach. Let it stand for at least two hours before use, but it should preferably be left overnight.

If all the people in your home follow these rules, they will neither contract nor spread cholera.
About cholera
Cholera became a problem in southern Africa in the early 1970s. Since then, South Africa has been trying to prevent and control it, as well as to treat people who have contracted the disease.

Cholera can spread easily and even a person who looks healthy can carry cholera bacteria.

The best way to prevent cholera is to make people aware of it and to ensure that they have access to safe water and proper toilets and that they follow hygienic habits.

When cholera breaks out, one should identify it quickly, treat the sick and teach people how to prevent the disease from spreading.

What is cholera?
• Cholera is a diarrhoeal disease caused by the *Vibrio cholerae* bacterium.
• Symptoms appear two to four days after ingesting the bacteria.
• Dehydration due to vomiting and diarrhoea are the main symptoms.
• If cholera is not treated, severe dehydration can be fatal, and can happen within six hours.
• The cholera bacteria make a poison that keeps the human body from taking up liquids.

How is cholera transmitted?
Cholera bacteria live in the faeces of infected people. When the faeces end up in water, the bacteria quickly increase in number. When people drink that water or eat food that has been in contact with that water, the bacteria enter their bodies.

The bacteria may be passed on to other people in the following ways:
• You can contract cholera by eating or drinking contaminated food or water.
• Faecal excretions into water sources introduce the bacteria into the water, where they can live for at least three weeks if the water is warm, saline or alkaline. The bacteria can also survive in food, especially seafood.
• 70% of people who drink contaminated water can become cholera carriers and they may display few or no symptoms. These people can excrete the bacteria for several weeks.

How do you recognise cholera?
• Cholera symptoms usually appear suddenly. People with cholera have a running stomach, low blood pressure, cramps in the legs and stomach and a low temperature.
• They also vomit, struggle to pass urine and dehydrate quickly and severely. They have a dry mouth and skin, and they may even faint or collapse completely.
• People with these symptoms must be treated immediately.
• If a person with cholera is not treated, he or she can die in a short time from lack of body fluids.