



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

State Department for Public Health
and Professional Standards

PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY: MINISTRY OF HEALTH'S INTERVENTIONS AND GUIDELINES ON WATERBORNE DISEASES

Date: **3rd May, 2024**

The State Department of Public Health and Professional Standards wishes to provide an update on the current situation of waterborne diseases, particularly the cholera outbreak in the country. Despite our successful control efforts, the ongoing heavy rains and flooding have led to a confirmed case of cholera reported on 26th April 2024 in Tana River County. This single case is significant, as it amounts to an outbreak. There are additional reports of suspected diarrhoeal cases in Marsabit County. This underscores the immediate and considerable risk of waterborne diseases during this time.

Waterborne diseases such as Cholera are indeed severe, but they are also preventable. It is crucial to understand that early detection and prompt medical attention can make a significant difference, potentially saving lives. This knowledge empowers us all to take the necessary precautions and act swiftly in case of any symptoms.

Several risk factors have contributed to the spread of this deadly disease. The main one is the destruction of sanitation facilities during these long rains, resulting in the collapse of latrines and the filling of latrines with flood water, which mixes water sources with fecal matter. In addition, congestion in rescue camps with limited sanitation facilities, inadequate water sanitation and hygiene facilities, and the consumption of untreated water are likely to worsen the situation.

The Government, through the Ministry of Health, is working with multi-agency teams in all affected areas to ensure control of cholera and other waterborne diseases through the implementation of the following measures:

1. Continuous advisories are provided to all counties to maintain heightened surveillance in public and private health facilities and at the community level to detect and report all waterborne diseases.
2. Provision of cholera contingency supplies to assist in the management of patients.
3. Distribution of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) Supplies to help purify water sources and treat household water in all high-risk areas and rescue camps.
4. Strengthening community health education and engagement activities to address risk factors and promote healthy practices, such as treating water before use and using community health promoters (CHPs).

Impact of waterborne diseases

- ii) Outbreak of acute watery diarrhea (typhoid fever, cholera, and other diarrheal diseases)
- iii) Increase in water-related diarrheal diseases
- iv) Flooding and mixing of water with fecal matter (faeces) leads to increased diarrheal diseases
- v) Wastes and garbage mixed with storm waters during floods may lead to waterborne diseases

Recommended Public Health Actions:

We would like to emphasize on the following preventive measures:

Handwashing

- i) Ensure proper washing of hands with soap and running water during critical times
- ii) Wash your hands with clean running water and soap before eating
- iii) Wash your hands with clean running water and soap after using the toilet or latrine

Use safe treated water

- iv) Make water safe by **boiling or treating it with chlorine**. Safe, treated water prevents the direct and indirect consumption of contaminated water that leads to illness.
- v) Ensure you boil or treat water for drinking and other domestic purposes.

Food safety

- vi) Always consume cooked foods while still warm.
- vii) Always thoroughly wash meat, fruits, vegetables, household cutlery, and utensils.

Use of Latrines/Safe fecal disposal

- viii) Avoid open defecation. Use a toilet or pit latrine for long calls.
- ix) Intensify community surveillance and report suspected contamination of water with fecal matter
- x) Report all dilapidated latrines and sewer lines to the nearest community health promoter, health facility, public health office, or local administration.

Waste Management

- xi) Appropriate and safe waste and garbage disposal during floods and in temporary shelters is crucial in preventing diseases
- xii) Ensure segregated and proper disposal of garbage and household waste to protect ourselves from diseases
- xiii) Always cover/bury/burn and store safely for disposal to avoid rodents and vector breeding places.

Seek Immediate Help: If you notice any signs or symptoms of diarrhea or vomiting, please seek immediate treatment (medical attention) in the nearest health facility or contact the National Public Health Emergency Operation Centre at 0729 47 14 14, 0732 35 35 35, or 719.

The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with county governments and partners, urges all citizens to **strictly adhere to the instructions and guidelines** issued by the government and response teams. Your **compliance is crucial** not only **for your own safety** but also **for the collective effort to control the spread of waterborne diseases.**

Thank you.



Mary Muthoni Muriuki, CBS
PRINCIPAL SECRETARY