



A man is given a footbath to reduce the spread of the disease at Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) Cholera Treatment Centre in Lae. ©Sally McMillan/MSF

Nearly 3000 affected by PNG cholera outbreak

April 12, 2010: More than 2,900 people in Papua New Guinea have been infected with cholera since an outbreak began eight months ago.

The country's first cholera outbreak in 50 years is affecting three adjoining northern provinces, Madang, Morobe and East Sepik.

The World Health Organisation's representative in PNG, Dr Eigil Sorensen, says 500 people got the disease in the second half of March, but the infection rate has since eased.

"The latest figures as of end of March is 2907 cases. Although what we've seen within the last two three weeks that it seems to be slowing down, in particular in the East Sepik, but also in Madang, while there're still a large number of cases in Morobe province occurring."

Dr Sorensen says there were about 10 new infections over the last fortnight.

He says while the rate is slowing down, it could be due to its natural cycle.

(RNZI)

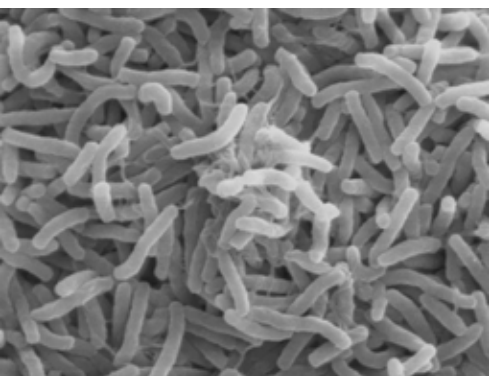
Cholera the facts

A person may get cholera by drinking water or eating food contaminated with the cholera bacterium.

Cholera is an acute infection of the intestine, caused by a bacteria called *Vibrio cholerae*. The illness begins suddenly with painless watery diarrhoea, nausea and vomiting. Most people who become infected have very mild diarrhoea or may not even have any symptoms

Severe cholera cases have very bad diarrhoea and vomiting, which may cause rapid dehydration and death.

If untreated, 50% of people with severe cholera will die, but prompt and adequate treatment reduces this to less than 1% of cases.



Vibrio cholerae: This nasty bug kills approximately 120,000 worldwide annually.