



Potential cholera exposure in Kigoma, Tanzania

June 1st, 2015

Dear State Refugee Health Coordinator:

Over the past weeks, there has been a mass influx of Burundian asylum seekers crossing the border into Tanzania and Rwanda. The majority of asylum seekers have crossed the border from Burundi into Tanzania and are situated in Kigoma, in close proximity to Nyarugusu Refugee Camp, where active US resettlement of Congolese refugees is taking place.

On May 24th, 2015, CDC was notified of a cholera outbreak among the Burundian asylum seekers in Kigoma Tanzania.

The *V. cholerae* strain currently circulating in Kigoma is sensitive to tetracycline, ciprofloxacin, and erythromycin antibiotics.

While there have been no reports of a cholera outbreak affecting Congolese refugees inside Nyarugusu camp, CDC is notifying its domestic partners to raise awareness of the potential cholera exposure of Congolese refugees, so partners can respond quickly if any refugees develop symptoms after arrival in the US.

Refugees resettling to the US from this region of Tanzania will be arriving in ten different US states. If your state receives a refugee from Kigoma while the cholera outbreak is ongoing, a notice will be posted to your state-specific Epi-X Forum.

CDC and its partners are currently implementing the following measures in response to the potential cholera exposure:

1. Congolese refugees departing Kigoma for resettlement into the US are being moved to the transit center outside the camp for a 5-day period prior to departure, to assure that anyone incubating cholera will not develop cholera while en-route to the US.
2. Pre-departure antibiotic prophylaxis may be administered to refugees based on the evolving epidemiology of the outbreak, and the refugee's age and pregnancy status. If refugees received antibiotics, the information will be provided in your state-specific notification.
3. At the transit center, hygiene measures and cholera prevention messaging are being reinforced.
4. An IOM nurse is on the bus that shuttles refugees from the refugee camp to the transit center. The nurse checks for visibly ill refugees and ensures that those who are ill are not allowed to board the bus, and are referred back to a healthcare provider in camp for treatment.

Cholera is an acute diarrheal illness spread by ingestion of contaminated food and water, so meticulous hand hygiene after toileting and before handling food or beverages is a cornerstone of prevention along with safe sanitation practices. You can get cholera if you eat food or drink beverages that have been handled by a person who is shedding *V. cholerae* or if sewage contaminated with *V. cholerae* bacteria gets into the water you use for drinking or washing food. Additional information on cholera is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/cholera/index.html> and through your local health department. CDC, in partnership with in-country and international partners, will continue to monitor the situation in Tanzania, and will follow up with additional information and recommendations as they become available. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Heather Burke

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