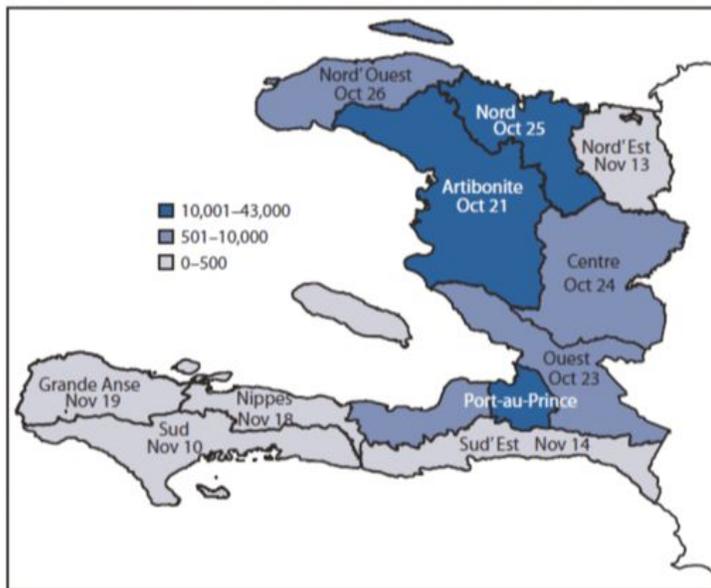


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## Haiti Cholera

Cholera is an illness caused by bacterial infection of the intestine. Historical records show evidence of cholera outbreaks as far back as 1820. In current times, it is estimated that 2.9 million people are diagnosed with cholera and 95,000 people die from cholera each year. In 2010, Haiti experienced a large outbreak that lasted for over 9 years. From 2010 to 2019 there were 665,000 cases of cholera in Haiti and 10,000 people died.



Number and spread of cholera cases in Haiti October 2010 to November 2010

Center for Disease Control (CDC)

### **Who was affected and what happened when they got sick?**

Like many other infections, individuals who were very young, very old, or had other illnesses were most at risk if infected with cholera. Because the disease is transmitted through contaminated water, those who did not have access to clear water and sanitation were at higher risk of becoming infected. Cholera is often described as a disease that sickens and kills the poorest and most vulnerable people. Many of the cholera infections were mild or without symptoms. Approximately 1 in 10 people who got infected with cholera experienced severe symptoms including watery diarrhea, vomiting, and cramps. Without treatment, loss of body fluids resulted in dehydration, shock, and death.

## **Where did the cholera outbreak start and how did it spread?**

In the fall of 2010, a deadly earthquake occurred in Haiti, disrupting an already failing healthcare and sanitation system in the country. In the aftermath of the earthquake, international workers from many countries came to Haiti to help support relief efforts. Many of the relief workers came from countries where cholera is regularly found. Experts determined the initial source of cholera was a United Nations peacekeeping camp established to provide relief for earthquake victims. Individuals in the camp

likely had cholera and when those people used the bathroom the cholera-causing bacteria was introduced into the water sources. Because of poor sanitation, the bacteria was in the drinking water causing thousands of people to become infected. The United Nations resisted taking any responsibility for the outbreak.



Kendra Helmer, USAID  
Haiti's Artibonite River where the first cases of cholera were diagnosed.

## **How did people respond?**

At the beginning of the outbreak, there was widespread panic in the Haitian communities. The United Nations refusal to take responsibility for the outbreak caused increased tension. Despite rising tensions, there was a rapid response from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Haitian Ministry of Public Health and Population to combat the spread of the disease. These efforts prevented deaths in communities by

- providing rehydration solution for those becoming dehydrated,
- providing water treatment kits and containers for the safe storage of water in the home,
- emphasizing the importance of handwashing and proper sewage disposal, and
- Establishing the National Cholera Surveillance System (NCSS) to monitor the spread.

## **Sources:**

Cholera in Haiti: <https://www.cdc.gov/cholera/haiti/index.html>

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U.N. admits role In Haiti Cholera outbreak that has killed thousands:

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