

Cholera epidemic thwarted but still scary

07 November 2007 - There seems to be no new cholera patients after last week outbreak but the development of the disease is unpredictable, said Health Minister Nguyen Quoc Trieu at an urgent meeting Tuesday afternoon.

Trieu said that the types of food suspected as the virus's source are not limited to shrimp paste and fresh vegetables only, so there is still a danger of an epidemic.

The number of new cases reported Tuesday was 50 fewer than Monday and nearly 90 fewer than Sunday. No new districts or provinces have reported outbreaks.

Hanoi, Hai Phong, Hung Yen, Thai Binh, Thanh Hoa and Hai Duong saw the lowest number of new patients while cases still increased in Ha Tay and Vinh Phuc Tuesday.

Minister Trieu emphasised that the health sector and people must not loosen their vigilance against the epidemic because sources are various and often times, unexpected. While before it was carried in fresh food, it now spreads through processed food and perhaps even water.

"Once water carries the disease, everything such as food, utensils, hands, etc. are infected," said Nguyen Tran Hien, Dean of the Central Institute for Hygiene and Epidemiology.

Health experts are also expressing concern over the spread of cholera through travel and transportation. Hien said that many people often travel between provinces, especially in Hanoi, and can carry cholera from the capital city to surrounding provinces and vice versa. Around 75% of cholera carriers don't show symptoms while their body is capable of carrying and transmitting the virus from one to two weeks.

Four cholera patients, all elderly, have died but the Health Ministry hasn't specifically released that they died from the disease itself.

About the Author

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