

UN appeals for \$164M to combat Haiti cholera

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Residents argue while they wait to collect water to be used for cleaning or cooking at the Cite Soleil slum in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Thursday, Nov. 11, 2010. Three weeks after it was confirmed for the first time ever in Haiti, cholera has claimed at least 643 lives, mostly in the countryside, as the waterborne sickness may be also growing fast in Cite Soleil and perhaps all of Port-au-Prince, a city of more than 2.5 million. (AP Photo/Ramon Espinosa)

(AP) -- The United Nations asked for \$164 million Friday to fight the cholera outbreak in Haiti that has already claimed 724 lives and is expected to continue spreading for up to a year.

The funds will be used by U.N. and non-governmental organizations to bring in additional doctors, medicines and water-purification equipment to treat up to 200,000 people who could show cholera symptoms ranging from mild diarrhea to severe dehydration, the global body said.

"We absolutely need this money as soon as possible," said Elisabeth Byrs, a spokeswoman for the U.N. humanitarian office.

She told reporters in Geneva that the funds need to be provided quickly "otherwise all our efforts can be outrun by the [epidemic](#)."

At least 11,125 cases of cholera have been confirmed in five of Haiti's 10 districts since the outbreak began last month. Ten deaths and 278 cases have occurred in the capital Port-au-Prince.

The [World Health Organization](#) said Friday that the epidemic isn't likely to end soon.

"The projections of 200,000 cases over the next six to twelve months shows the amplitude of what could be expected," said WHO spokesman Gregory Hartl. He noted that the current fatality rate of 6.5 percent is far higher than it should be.

"No one alive in Haiti has experienced cholera before, so it's a population which is very susceptible to the bacteria," Hartl said. "Once it is in water systems it transmits very easily, and it transmits among people who are often asymptomatic."

"Cholera, now that it is in Haiti, probably the [bacteria](#) will be there for a number of years to come," he added. "It will not go away."

The cause of the outbreak in Haiti is still unknown. The country hadn't seen [cholera](#) cases for decades before last month.

"The specific origin of this specific outbreak is something which probably will be investigated at some point, but what is important right now is the response on the ground," Hartl said.

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