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etymologia

Cholera

[käl'ər-ə]

From the Greek *cholē* for bile. Although the term cholera is now used only to refer to disease caused by the bacterium *Vibrio cholerae*, until the late 19th century any diarrheal illness might be referred to as cholera. For many centuries, medicine in Europe was based on Galen's theory of the 4 humors in the body: blood, bile, black bile, and phlegm. Diarrhea and vomiting were interpreted as the body's attempt to restore balance and good health by expelling excess cholera, hence, many gastroenterological illnesses were referred to as cholera. A 12th century treatise, the *Regimen Sanitatis Salernitanum*, described the effects of excess cholera thusly, "Your tongue will seem all rough, and oftentimes cause vomits, unaccustomed and hateful, great thirst, your excrements are full of slime, the stomach squeamish, sustenance ungrateful, your appetite will seem in nought delighting."

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