



## Frequently Asked Questions: *Vibrio vulnificus*

### ***How can people get infected with Vibrio vulnificus?***

People with open wounds who have direct contact with warm seawater and those who have eaten raw shellfish are at risk of becoming infected with *Vibrio vulnificus*. Individuals with weakened immune systems should be particularly aware of the dangers of *Vibrio vulnificus*. There is no evidence of person-to-person transmission of *Vibrio vulnificus*.

### ***What are the symptoms of Vibrio vulnificus?***

Ingestion of *Vibrio vulnificus* can cause vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal pain. When open wounds are exposed to warm seawater, *Vibrio vulnificus* can cause an infection of the skin and these infections can lead to skin breakdown and ulcers. The bacterium can invade the bloodstream, causing a severe and life-threatening illness with symptoms like fever, chills, decreased blood pressure and blistering skin lesions. Wound infections may also be serious in people with weakened immune systems. In severe cases, amputation or death may occur.

### ***How is infection from Vibrio vulnificus diagnosed?***

*Vibrio vulnificus* infection is diagnosed by stool, wound or blood cultures. Doctors should be suspicious of this infection when patients present with stomach illness, fever or shock following the ingestion of raw seafood, especially oysters, or with a wound infection after exposure to seawater.

### ***How common is Vibrio vulnificus infection?***

*Vibrio vulnificus* is a rare disease. In 2014 the Florida Department of Health investigated 32 cases of *Vibrio vulnificus* infections that included seven deaths.

### ***Can people get infected with Vibrio vulnificus from cuts from shaving prior to entering water?***

While *Vibrio vulnificus* is a serious disease that can lead to illness or even death, if you take the proper precautions your risk is minimal.

### ***What are some tips for preventing Vibrio vulnificus infections?***

- Avoid exposure of open wounds or broken skin to warm salt or brackish water;
- Do not eat raw shellfish (oysters, clams, mussels) and cook shellfish thoroughly before eating;
- Avoid cross-contaminating ready-to-eat foods with raw shellfish and its juices.
- Eat shellfish promptly after cooking and refrigerate leftovers; and
- Wear protective clothing (e.g., gloves) when handling raw shellfish.

### ***How is Vibrio vulnificus infection treated?***

If *Vibrio vulnificus* is suspected, treatment should be initiated immediately because antibiotics improve survival. Aggressive attention should be given to the wound site and for patients with severe wound infections, amputation of the infected limb is sometimes necessary.

For more information on care and treatment specifics, please visit the [CDC's website](#).

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