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HEALTH OFFICIALS URGE RESIDENTS TO TAKE PRECAUTIONS TO AVOID EXPOSURE TO *VIBRIO VULNIFICUS*



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[Brevard County] – The Florida Department of Health in Brevard County (DOH- Brevard) urges Floridians and visitors to the area to take precautions to avoid exposure to *Vibrio vulnificus*. *Vibrio vulnificus* can cause disease in those who eat contaminated seafood or expose an open wound to warm, brackish seawater. Ingestion of *Vibrio vulnificus* can cause vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal pain. *Vibrio vulnificus* can also cause an infection of the skin when open wounds are exposed; these infections may lead to skin breakdown and ulcers.

“I encourage residents to practice good wound care, as it is the best way to prevent a bacterial skin infection,” stated DOH-Brevard Interim Administrator Miranda Hawker. “Keep open wounds covered with clean, dry bandages until healed and don't delay first aid of even minor, non-infected wounds like blisters, scrapes or any break in the skin.”

Persons who have weakened immune systems, especially those with chronic liver disease, are at risk for *Vibrio vulnificus* infection when they eat raw shellfish, particularly oysters. People with these pre-existing medical conditions are 80 times more likely to develop *Vibrio vulnificus* blood infections than healthy people.

Tips for preventing *Vibrio vulnificus* infections include:

- Do not eat raw oysters or other raw shellfish.
- Cook shellfish (oysters, clams, mussels) thoroughly.
- For shellfish in the shell, either a) boil until the shells open and continue boiling for 5 more minutes, or b) steam until the shells open and then continue cooking for 9 more minutes. Do not eat those shellfish that do not open during cooking. Boil shucked oysters at least 3 minutes, or fry them in oil at least 10 minutes at 375°F.
- Avoid cross-contamination of cooked seafood and other foods with raw seafood and juices from raw seafood.
- Eat shellfish promptly after cooking and refrigerate leftovers.
- Avoid exposure of open wounds or broken skin to warm salt or brackish water, or to raw shellfish harvested from such waters.
- Wear protective clothing (e.g., gloves) when handling raw shellfish.

For more information on *Vibrio Vulnificus*, view the attached frequently asked questions.

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