

IDRS Infectious Disease Reporting System

Disease Reporting 24 Hours a Day

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health

VIBRIOSIS

Vibriosis is an infection caused by bacteria called *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* or *Vibrio vulnificus*. The bacterium is in the same family as the bacteria that cause cholera. It lives in salty water and naturally inhabits coastal waters in the United States and Canada.

Symptoms

If someone swallows the bacteria, symptoms usually occur within 1-3 days, but sometimes as long as 7 days.

- Symptoms of infection from swallowing the bacteria include:
 - Explosive watery diarrhea with abdominal cramping
 - Nausea and vomiting
 - Fever and chills
 - Occasionally, a person can be infected without symptoms.
 - Illness usually lasts for about three days, but may be as many as 10 days.
- Blood, wound, or skin infections are also possible. Symptoms of these include:
 - Increasing swelling, redness, and pain at the site of a wound
 - Swelling and redness of skin on arms or legs, with blood-tinged blisters
 - Fever
 - Low blood pressure (dizziness, fainting) and shock. This is a sign of bloodstream infection.

Transmission

- *Vibrio* is a naturally occurring organism commonly found in seawater. People are usually exposed to the bacteria either from direct contact with seawater or by eating seafood from contaminated waters.
- Most people become infected by eating raw, inadequately cooked, or improperly refrigerated seafood contaminated by vibriosis-causing bacteria. Oysters and other shellfish are the most likely to carry *Vibrio*.
- Less commonly, skin infections result from exposure of an open wound to warm seawater.
- Humans cannot transmit vibriosis to other humans.

Treatment

- *Vibrio* organisms can be isolated from cultures of stool (poop), wound, or blood.
- Usually, the disease goes away on its own. Severe illness may occur in people with weakened immune systems or liver problems. Patients should drink plenty of liquids to replace fluids lost through diarrhea.
- Treatment depends on the kind of infection and the type of bacteria. In most cases, antibiotics do not help. However, they may be needed for people who have a high risk of serious illness.

Prevention

- Avoid raw shellfish. Cook all shellfish thoroughly (boil until shells open, plus 5 more minutes)
- Avoid cross-contamination of cooked food with raw seafood or juices from raw seafood.
- Avoid exposure of an open wound or broken skin to warm salt or brackish water or to raw shellfish.
- Wear gloves when handling raw shellfish.

Additional Information

People who handle food as part of their job must stay home from work until symptoms of vibriosis are gone.

All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.



c/o Franklin County Public Health, 280 East Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215-4562

Call: (614) 525-8888 • After Hours: (614) 525-3965 • Fax: (614) 525-8890

Email: idsr@franklincountyohio.gov • Web: www.idrsinfo.org

