



## VIBRIOSIS

### What is vibriosis?

Vibriosis is an illness caused by the *Vibrio* bacteria species. Illness often occurs from eating raw or undercooked shellfish or by exposing a wound to seawater. *Vibrio* bacteria naturally live in saltwater and brackish waters, a mixture of fresh water and saltwater. About a dozen *Vibrio* species can cause human illness, known as vibriosis. These bacteria are present in higher concentrations between May and October when water temperatures are warmer.

### Who gets vibriosis?

Anyone can get vibriosis; however, people with liver disease, cancer, or a weakened immune system (especially those with chronic liver disease) may be more likely to get an infection or develop complications when infected. It is estimated that every year in the United States, 80,000 people become infected, resulting in about 500 hospitalizations and 100 deaths. In Delaware, the Division of Public Health (DPH) reported 12 cases of *Vibrio* between May 1 and October 31, 2022.

### How is vibriosis spread?

The most common sources of infection are consuming raw or undercooked shellfish, exposing wounds to contaminated coastal environments, and handling raw shellfish.

### What are the symptoms of vibriosis?

Symptoms of vibriosis can vary depending on the species. Common symptoms include watery diarrhea, stomach cramps, vomiting, fever, and chills. Ear and wound infections often appear red, swollen, and painful.

### How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually appear within 12 to 24 hours and can last one to seven days. Most people infected with vibriosis will recover on their own. However, severe illness may result in hospitalization or death. Immunocompromised people and those with liver disease are at increased risk for severe illness.

### Should an infected person be excluded from work or school?

*V. parahaemolyticus* does not usually spread from person to person; however, person-to-person spread is possible if there is poor personal hygiene. If staff who handle food have symptoms, exclude them from work or school.



# Frequently Asked Questions

## **What is the treatment for vibriosis?**

People infected with vibriosis should drink plenty of fluids since diarrhea (loose stools) can cause dehydration (loss of water from the body). In severe or lengthy cases involving ear or wound infections, antibiotics are sometimes prescribed.

## **What can a person or community do to prevent the spread of vibriosis?**

To help prevent vibriosis, avoid eating raw or undercooked shellfish such as oysters. People with a weakened immune system or liver disease are at increased risk. People with a wound, such as a cut or scrape, should avoid exposing it to warm seawater in coastal environments and/or cover the wound with a waterproof bandage. Wear gloves when handling raw shellfish and thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water when finished.

## **Resources**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/vibrio/>