

VIBRIOSIS

What is vibriosis?

Vibriosis is an intestinal illness caused by one of several types of bacteria (germs) in the vibrio family. In Washington, *V. parahaemolyticus* is the most common type. The bacteria are found in fish and shellfish living in the sea or in rivers and streams where they meet the ocean (coastal waters). Most infections of vibriosis occur during the warmer months of summer and fall.

How is vibriosis spread?

A person usually becomes ill with vibriosis after eating contaminated seafood that is raw or undercooked, especially oysters, crabs, and shrimp. However, even fully cooked seafood can be recontaminated if rinsed with seawater.

What are symptoms of vibriosis?

Vibriosis causes watery diarrhea, abdominal cramping, nausea and vomiting, fever, chills, and headache. The illness is usually not severe and lasts about 3 days. The bacteria may also cause an infection in the blood or a skin infection. Skin infections commonly result from swimming in contaminated seawater with broken skin or cuts, or from punctures resulting from handling contaminated shellfish.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually appear within 12-24 hours of exposure, but can range from 4-96 hours.

How is vibriosis diagnosed and treated?

Vibrio bacteria are found in stool (feces) or blood cultures, or in drainage from an infected wound. Most vibriosis illnesses do not require treatment, but antibiotics may be given for severe illness.

Is vibriosis infectious (contagious)?

Vibriosis is not spread from person to person.

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How can vibriosis be prevented?

1. Do not eat raw shellfish. All children and immunocompromised people should avoid eating raw seafood. Refrigerate shellfish immediately upon purchasing and ensure the product is kept cold until preparation.
2. Cook all oysters, clams and mussels adequately. Seafood should reach a minimum internal temperature of 145°F (63°C) for 15 seconds. Refrigerate all uneaten seafood immediately.
3. Handle uncooked seafood with care, wear gloves when handling raw shellfish and wash your hands well after handling.
4. If you have breaks on your skin, rinse your skin well with fresh water after exposure to coastal waters.
5. Before harvesting shellfish, consult the 24 hour PSP Hotline 1-800-562-5632 or the [DOH Emergency Closures due to Marine Biotoxins and Vibrio](#) website for information on closed shellfish harvest areas. .
6. Avoid cross-contamination of cooked seafood and other foods with raw seafood and juices from raw seafood.

Vibriosis is a Washington State reportable disease and must be reported to your local health department. In Snohomish County, contact Communicable Disease Surveillance and Response at 425.339.5278 Monday through Friday, 8AM - 5 PM.

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