

# Vibriosis

## Fact Sheet



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### What is Vibriosis?

Vibriosis is an infection caused by one of many types of *Vibrio* bacteria or germs. These germs are often found in salty, coastal, sea waters in the United States and Canada. They are present in higher numbers in the summer.

*Vibrio* species in Maine that cause illness include *alginolyticus*, *parahaemolyticus*, *vulnificus* and *fluvialis*.

Cholera is a type of Vibriosis which causes a lot of watery stools and vomiting, and can cause death from loss of water and salts from the body. It is not often found in the United States, but is a risk for travelers to other countries.

### How can I get Vibriosis?

Most people become infected by eating raw or undercooked shellfish, especially oysters. Skin may get infected if an open cut or sore touches warm sea water. The infection is not passed from one person to another.

### What are the symptoms of Vibriosis?

When swallowed, *Vibrio* causes watery stools often with belly cramping, nausea, vomiting, fever and chills. This will usually happen within 24 hours of eating. Illness usually goes away on its own after about 3 days.

Some of these germs can also cause a skin infection with redness, heat and pus if an open cut or sore touches warm sea water.

Persons with weak immune systems or liver disease are at higher risk of getting an infection in their blood due to *Vibrio* species.

### How would I know if I have Vibriosis?

Your healthcare provider may take a sample of stool, wound, or blood to test for *Vibrio*. He/she may suspect *Vibrio* if you have watery diarrhea and have eaten raw or undercooked seafood, especially oysters, or if a wound gets infected after contact with sea water.

### Can *Vibrio* be treated?

Treatment is not needed in most cases. Antibiotics have not been shown to lessen the severity or the length of the illness. Your health care provider may decide to treat you if you have severe diarrhea, an infected wound, or a blood infection from *Vibrio*. Patients should drink lots of liquids to replace fluids lost through diarrhea.

### How can Vibriosis be prevented?

Most infections caused by *Vibrio* in the United States can be prevented by:

- Thoroughly cooking seafood, especially oysters
- keeping open wounds from touching warm sea water

When cases are traced to an oyster bed, Division of Marine Resources officials recommend closing the oyster bed until it is safe to harvest.

### Where can I get more information?

For more information contact your healthcare provider or local health center. You can also contact the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention by calling 1-800-821-5821 or visiting [www.mainepublichealth.gov](http://www.mainepublichealth.gov). The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website - <http://www.cdc.gov> - is another excellent source of health information.