



## Vibriosis

### What is vibriosis?

Vibriosis is an illness caused by bacteria called vibrio. Vibrio can be found in fish and shellfish living in saltwater. Types of vibrio most commonly found in the United States are *Vibrio vulnificus* and *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*.

### How is vibriosis spread?

Most people get infected by eating raw or undercooked shellfish, particularly oysters. This organism can cause an infection in the skin when an open wound is exposed to warm seawater but this is less common.

### What are the symptoms of vibriosis?

Vibrio can cause watery diarrhea often with abdominal cramping, nausea, vomiting, fever and chills. Symptoms usually occur within 24 hours of eating the organism. Illness is usually self-limited and lasts 3 days. Severe disease is rare and occurs more commonly in persons with weakened immune systems. It can also cause an infection of the skin when an open wound is exposed to warm seawater, but this is rare.

### How is vibriosis diagnosed?

Vibrio organisms can be isolated from cultures of stool, wound, or blood. Your health care provider will determine which type of sample would be best to send to the laboratory.

### How is vibriosis treated?

Treatment depends on the type of infection and the particular germ. In some cases, antibiotics are needed. In others, treatment is supportive. Infected persons should drink plenty of liquids to replace fluids lost through diarrhea. In severe cases, antibiotics may be needed. Talk to your health care provider if you have symptoms.

### Can vibriosis be prevented?

Yes. Cook seafood, especially oysters. When an outbreak is traced to an oyster bed, health officials recommend closing the oyster bed until conditions are improved. Also avoid exposing open wounds to warm seawater.

### Are there any health regulations for people with vibriosis?

Yes. Vibriosis is a disease that can be spread to other people, so health care providers in Boston are required by law to report cases to the Boston Public Health Commission. In order to protect the public, workers at food-related businesses who have vibriosis must stay out of work until they don't have diarrhea and the Boston Public Health Commission has cleared them to return to work.

Food-related businesses include restaurants, sandwich shops, hospital kitchens, supermarkets, and food processing plants. This regulation also includes workers in schools, residential programs, and child care and health care facilities who feed, give mouth care, or dispense medications to clients.

