

NON-CHOLERA *VIBRIO*

What is non-cholera *Vibrio*?

Non-cholera *Vibrio* infections are also called vibriosis and are caused by species of the *Vibrio* bacteria other than *Vibrio cholerae* (which causes cholera). *Vibrio* bacteria live in certain coastal waters and are present in higher concentrations between May and October when the water temperatures are warmer. About a dozen *Vibrio* species can cause human illness known as vibriosis.

What are the symptoms of vibriosis?

Vibriosis can cause a range of symptoms depending on the species. Common symptoms include watery diarrhea, stomach cramps, vomiting, fever, chills. Ear and wound infections often appear red, swollen and painful. Symptoms usually appear within 24 hours of ingestion and last about 3 days. Severe illness is rare and usually occurs in people with weakened immune systems.

How is vibriosis spread?

Most people become infected by eating raw or undercooked shellfish, particularly oysters. Certain *Vibrio* species can also cause a skin infection when an open wound is exposed to salt water or brackish water; brackish water is a mixture of fresh and salt water and is often found where rivers meet the sea. You can also get vibriosis from handling raw shellfish.

How long are people contagious?

Vibriosis is not transmitted from person to person. It is caused by non-cholera *Vibrio* bacteria.

Who gets vibriosis?

Anyone can get sick from vibriosis, but you may be more likely to get an infection or severe complications if you: have liver disease, cancer, diabetes, HIV, or thalassemia; receive immune-suppressing therapy for the treatment of disease; take medicine to decrease stomach acid levels; have had recent stomach surgery.

What treatment is available for people with vibriosis?

Most people infected with vibriosis will recover on their own; however, severe illness may result in hospitalization or death. People with vibriosis should drink plenty of fluids since diarrhea can cause dehydration (loss of water from the body). Antibiotics are sometimes prescribed, for example for ear or wound infections.

Do infected people need to be kept home from school, work or daycare?

You only need to stay home from work or school if you are too sick to attend. Most people with a mild case of vibriosis recover after about 3 days with no lasting effects. However, people with *Vibrio vulnificus* infection can get seriously ill and need intensive care and even limb amputation. About 1 in 5 people with this type of infection die, sometimes within a day or two of becoming ill.

How can I protect myself and my family from getting vibriosis?

Don't eat raw or undercooked shellfish, such as oysters. If you have a wound (including cuts and scrapes), avoid contact with salt water or brackish water or cover the wound with a waterproof bandage if there's a possibility it could come into contact with salt water or brackish water, raw seafood, or raw seafood juices. Before cooking shellfish, discard any with open shells. Then either boil shellfish in the shell until the shells open and continue boiling another 3-5 minutes, or add to a steamer with water already steaming and cook for another 4-9 minutes. Only eat the shellfish that open during cooking. Throw out any shellfish that do not open fully after cooking. For shucked oysters, either boil for at least 3 minutes, or fry in oil for at least 3 minutes at 375° Fahrenheit, or broil 3 inches from heat for 3 minutes, or bake at 450° Fahrenheit for 10 minutes.