

Vibrio Species Causing Vibriosis



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Vibrio vulnificus & Wounds

You may have heard that you can get *Vibrio* infection from eating raw or undercooked oysters and other seafood. But did you know you can also get a *Vibrio* infection through an open wound? This can happen when a wound comes into contact with raw or undercooked seafood, its juices, or its drippings or with saltwater or [brackish water](#).*

One species, *Vibrio vulnificus*, can cause life-threatening wound infections. Many people with *Vibrio vulnificus* infection require intensive care or limb amputations, and about 1 in 5 people with this infection die, sometimes within a day or two of becoming ill.

Some *Vibrio vulnificus* infections lead to [necrotizing fasciitis](#), a severe infection in which the flesh around an open wound dies. Some media reports call this kind of infection “flesh-eating bacteria,” even though necrotizing fasciitis can be caused by more than one type of bacteria.



Who is more likely to get a *Vibrio* wound infection?

Anyone can get a *Vibrio* wound infection. But some people are more likely to get an infection and have severe complications—for example, people who have liver disease or take medicine that lowers the body’s ability to fight germs. [Find out if you are at increased risk for infection.](#)

How can I prevent a *Vibrio* wound infection if I have a wound?

You can reduce your chance of getting a *Vibrio* wound infection by following these tips:

- If you have a wound (including from a recent surgery, piercing, or tattoo), stay out of saltwater or brackish water, if possible. This includes wading at the beach.
- Cover your wound with a waterproof bandage if it could come into contact with saltwater, brackish water, or raw or undercooked seafood and its juices. This contact can happen during everyday activities, such as swimming, fishing, or walking on the beach. It could also happen when a hurricane or storm surge causes flooding.
- Wash wounds and cuts thoroughly with soap and water after they have contact with saltwater, brackish water, raw seafood, or its juices.

What are the signs and symptoms of *Vibrio vulnificus* infection?

Signs and symptoms of *Vibrio vulnificus* infection can include:

- Watery diarrhea, often accompanied by stomach cramping, nausea, vomiting, and fever
- For bloodstream infection: fever, chills, dangerously low blood pressure, and blistering skin lesions
- For wound infection, which may spread to the rest of the body: fever, redness, pain, swelling, warmth, discoloration, and discharge (leaking fluids).

How is infection diagnosed and treated?

Infection is diagnosed when *Vibrio* bacteria are found in the wound, blood, or stool (poop) of an ill person. The infection is treated with antibiotics. Doctors may need to amputate a patient’s legs or arms to remove dead or infected tissue.

Are you a healthcare professional? See guidance for [management of *Vibrio vulnificus* wound infections](#) and [emergency wound management](#).



Most *Vibrio* infections are caused by eating raw or undercooked oysters or other shellfish. [Find out how to properly select and cook this kind of seafood.](#)



Hurricanes, storm surges, and coastal flooding have been linked to *Vibrio vulnificus* infections. [Get tips for staying safe during natural disasters.](#)



Injured? [Find out how to take care of minor cuts and wounds and when to seek medical care.](#)

* Brackish water is a mixture of fresh and salt water. It is often found where rivers meet the sea.

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