

Fishermen and Vibrio



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VIBRIO INFECTIONS

Commercial and recreational fishermen need to be especially vigilant about protecting themselves from bacteria in the water. *Vibrio* are naturally occurring bacteria that live in seawater. They thrive during the warm-weather months of April through October, sometimes reaching high numbers. Fishermen can be exposed to serious infection through scrapes, cuts, punctures and other sustained or acute wounds contracted from fish, fishing hooks, knives and barnacles. *Vibrio vulnificus* can cause the most dangerous wound-related and food-borne illnesses attributed to the family of *Vibrio* bacteria. Nationwide, there are about 95 *V. vulnificus* infections annually, causing an average of 85 hospitalizations and 35 deaths. *V. vulnificus* have been labeled “flesh-eating bacteria” because wound infections may lead to skin breakdown.

www.DMR.MS.gov



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ARE YOU AT RISK FOR A SERIOUS INFECTION?

People who are most at risk for *Vibrio vulnificus* infections include those with weakened immune systems, chronic illnesses or those who may be undergoing certain medical treatments. Pre-existing medical conditions that leave individuals vulnerable to *Vibrio vulnificus* infections include:

- ALCOHOLISM
- CANCER
- CERTAIN MEDICAL TREATMENTS (those which weaken the immune system)
- CHRONIC STOMACH DISORDERS
- DIABETES
- LIVER DISEASES
- HEMOCHROMATOSIS (iron overload disease)
- HIV OR AIDS
- KIDNEY DISEASE OR FAILURE



Symptoms of *Vibrio vulnificus* infection usually develop within 3 to 24 hours and may include:

- LARGE BLISTERS (may be blood-filled)
- PAIN
- RAPID SWELLING
- RASH OR REDNESS AROUND THE WOUND



If you develop symptoms of a *Vibrio* infection, SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL TREATMENT.

IF YOU ARE UNSURE OF YOUR RISK, CONSULT YOUR DOCTOR BEFORE ENGAGING IN ACTIVITIES THAT MAY PUT YOU AT RISK OF INFECTION.

Vibrio vulnificus infections generally occur via two modes of transmission. One being the consumption of raw shellfish such as oysters, clams or mussels that may contain the bacteria. The other being wound-related, to which about half of all *vulnificus* infections are attributed.

Symptoms associated with food-borne *Vibrio* related illness from the consumption of raw seafood generally occur in 12-48 hours and may include:

- FEVER
- CHILLS
- NAUSEA
- STOMACH PAIN
- VOMITING
- DIARRHEA

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT www.CDC.gov

MDMR encourages commercial and recreational fishermen on the water to take precautions to eliminate or minimize exposure of wounds, sores, scratches or burns to seawater. Also, you should be cautious of wounds sustained from shellfish, finfish, crab, shrimp, hooks, knives or gear that are in contact with seawater. In addition to protecting wounds, wear protective gloves and eyewear when cleaning fish or shucking oysters.

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