



Hawaii State Department of Health

Disease Investigation Branch

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Vibriosis

What is Vibriosis?

Vibriosis is an illness caused by bacteria in the same family as those that cause cholera.

Vibrio bacteria can cause disease in people who eat raw or undercooked contaminated seafood or have an open wound that is exposed to seawater.

How do you get it?

You can get vibriosis by eating raw, undercooked fish or shellfish taken from contaminated coastal waters. You can also get vibriosis from any food cross-contaminated with raw seafood, or by rinsing foods with contaminated seawater.

Vibrio can also cause an infection of the skin when open wounds are exposed to warm seawater.

What are the symptoms of vibriosis?

The symptoms of vibriosis are watery, sometimes bloody, diarrhea and abdominal cramps, often with nausea, vomiting, fever, chills, and headache. The symptoms usually last for 2 to 3 days, but may last from 1 to 7 days.

A wound infected with *Vibrio* may appear red, swollen and painful.

When do symptoms start?

The symptoms usually begin 12 to 24 hours after exposure to the bacteria, but can start from 4 to 96 hours.

What is the treatment for vibriosis?

Severe diarrhea and/or vomiting over a long time may cause the body to lose fluid too quickly. Lost fluids should be replaced by drinking liquids such as fruit juices, soups, and special fluids called oral rehydration salts. Occasionally, fluid loss is so severe that fluids need to be given through the veins.

A doctor may also prescribe medicines to shorten the duration of the diarrhea and shedding of the bacteria in the stool.

Any wound that becomes very painful, swollen, or red requires immediate medical attention.

How can you keep from getting it?

Be aware of the risks associated with eating raw or undercooked seafood.

Make sure that cooked seafood reaches internal temperatures high enough to kill the bacteria by heating to at least 158°F (70°C) for a minimum of 15 minutes.

Refrigerate raw seafood (especially shellfish) as soon as possible after catch or purchase.

Avoid cross-contamination of foods while preparing them. Keep foods that will be eaten raw from becoming contaminated with seafood products. Wash cutting boards thoroughly after contact with each food, so that the boards do not contaminate the next food prepared. Do not lick your fingers, touch other foods, or smoke a cigarette before washing your hands after handling raw seafood.

Avoid the use of seawater in foodhandling areas.

Wound infections can be prevented by avoiding exposure of open wounds to warm seawater. If you become injured while swimming or surfing, wash the wound well with fresh water as soon as possible.

For more information, see the CDC's website at <https://www.cdc.gov/vibrio/index.html>