

What is vibriosis?

Vibriosis is an intestinal disease caused by small bacteria called vibrio, which are found in fish and shellfish that live in the ocean or in rivers and streams where they meet the ocean. Although there are several types of vibrio, *V. parahaemolyticus* and related species are the most common in Washington State.

Where does it come from?

Vibrio occurs naturally in marine coastal waters. Because the bacteria are more common in warmer months, fish and shellfish are more likely to be contaminated in the summer.

How is it spread?

Most cases occur from eating raw or undercooked fish or shellfish. (However, even fully cooked food can be recontaminated if rinsed with seawater.) Failure to keep shellfish cold after harvesting can contribute to the growth of the bacteria. Poor food handling practices during preparation or improper refrigeration of prepared seafood can also lead to illness. (For safe food handling practices see *Food Safety Tips* at www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/food/safetytips.html.)

What are the symptoms of vibriosis?

Symptoms include diarrhea, abdominal cramps, nausea, vomiting, headache, fever, and chills. The illness is usually mild or moderate, but severe cases sometimes require hospitalization.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually appear about 15 hours after consumption but it can take as long as 4 days.

Who is at risk?

Anyone who eats raw or partially cooked fish or shellfish is at risk. Because the bacteria multiply when it is warm, infection is more likely during the warmer months of the year. Large numbers of bacteria are needed to cause illness. People taking antacids are more likely to get sick.

What is the treatment?

The disease usually runs its course in 2-3 days. A few cases require hospitalization and/or antibiotic treatment. Replacement of fluids through oral rehydration with glucose-saline or an IV is needed in severe cases. Use of tetracycline can shorten the duration of symptoms and excretion of organisms.

How can I prevent vibriosis?

Eat only well cooked shellfish, especially in summer months. Do not rinse cooked food with seawater. Keep shellfish cold after harvesting.

What other marine vibrio organisms exist?

Several other marine vibrios found in Washington cause intestinal illness. The symptoms from these infections are similar to those from *V. parahaemolyticus*. Other vibrio species, such as *Vibrio vulnificus*, may cause more serious illnesses. These species are not found in Washington, but do occur elsewhere in the country.

What should I do if I suspect someone in my family has vibriosis?

If severe diarrhea or fever persists, contact your primary care provider.

Want more information?

Call the Office of Shellfish and Water Protection at (360) 236-3330 or Communicable Disease Epidemiology (206) 418-5500 (toll free 1-877-539-4344).

Biotoxin Hotline (24-hour) 1-800-562-5632

Online: www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/biotoxin.htm (general information)

KNOW BEFORE YOU DIG!

Check the DOH website at www.doh.wa.gov/shellfishsafety.htm

or

Call the Biotoxin Hotline at 1-800-562-5632

or

Call your local health department