

Vibriosis

Fact sheet

What is Vibriosis?

Vibriosis is an illness caused by *Vibrio* bacteria, which are usually found in warm coastal waters, especially during the summer months.

There are many different types of *Vibrio* bacteria. While cholera is also caused by a type of *Vibrio*, the term 'vibriosis' generally refers to other *Vibrio* infections. There is a separate NSW Health fact sheet for [cholera](#).

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of vibriosis can vary depending on the species and the site of infection.

A common form of vibriosis is gastroenteritis (gastro), with symptoms including:

- watery diarrhea
- stomach cramps
- vomiting
- fever
- chills

Contact with contaminated seawater can lead to ear or wound infections, with symptoms such as redness, swelling and pain.

Symptoms usually appear within 12-24 hours after exposure to the bacteria and can last 1-7 days.

Less commonly, *Vibrio* infection can lead to blood poisoning (sepsis), which can make people very sick. This is more likely in people with underlying health conditions.

How is it spread?

People usually get vibriosis by consuming raw or undercooked shellfish or seafood, particularly oysters, or when wounds are exposed to contaminated coastal environments. While *Vibrio* bacteria can be transmitted through contaminated food, there is no evidence that vibriosis spreads directly from person to person.

Who is at risk?

Anyone can get vibriosis, but people with liver disease, cancer or a weakened immune system are more likely to develop severe illness and complications when infected.

How is it prevented?

You can help avoid a *vibrio* infection by:

- cooking seafood thoroughly, especially oysters
- using separate cutting boards and utensils for raw seafood, and washing hands and surfaces thoroughly after handling raw seafood
- keeping open wounds away from raw seafood or its juices
- not going in warm coastal waters if you have an open wound

If you have gastro symptoms, to protect others:

- Ensure you maintain good hygiene. Wash your hands with soap and running water for at least 20 seconds after using the toilet
- Do not prepare food for others
- If you work with food, or as a carer for patients, children and the elderly, do not attend work until your doctor has said you no longer can spread vibriosis to others. The doctor will test your faeces (poo).
- Children in childcare and preschool should not attend until there has been no diarrhoea for at least 24 hours

How is it treated?

People with gastro should drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration (loss of water from the body) caused by vomiting and diarrhoea. If gastro is severe or prolonged, antibiotics may be prescribed.

Wound infections need to be assessed by a medical team for wound care and antibiotics.

Blood poisoning is a medical emergency and requires urgent medical care in hospital.

How is it diagnosed?

Vibriosis is diagnosed by laboratory tests which can identify *Vibrio* bacteria in stool (poop), wound, or blood samples.

For further information phone your local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055