



Are you fishing for trouble?

VIBRIO INFECTIONS

You may be “fishing for trouble” if you are a commercial or recreational fisherman working or playing in seawater. *Vibrio* bacteria are naturally occurring marine organisms that reach high numbers during the summer months in the Gulf of Mexico and off the Southeastern Coast of the United States. Sustaining a wound from a fish, crab, shrimp, hook, knife, or other source that contacted seawater could expose you to a serious infection. *Vibrio* bacteria cause 450 infections and 39 deaths yearly in the U.S. *Vibrio vulnificus* causes the most dangerous infections attributed to the family of *Vibrio* bacteria. About half the reported *Vibrio vulnificus* infections are caused by wounds.

Are you at risk for a serious infection?

The death rate for *Vibrio vulnificus* infected wounds is 22%. Although a healthy person can develop a *Vibrio* wound infection, the following conditions place you at the greatest risk of sustaining a serious infection.

- Liver disease
- Diabetes
- Alcoholism
- Cancer
- Weakened immune system
- Kidney disease or failure
- HIV / AIDS
- Stomach disorders
- Iron overload disease



For more information, visit
www.SafeOysters.org

For more information, visit www.SafeOysters.org



SYMPTOMS of *Vibrio vulnificus* infection usually develop within 3 to 48 hours and may include:

- Rapid swelling, pain, reddening of skin around wound
- Blisters, dead tissue around wound
- Fever/chills
- Nausea/stomach pain/vomiting/diarrhea
- Fluid accumulation, especially in legs
- Large blisters, sometimes blood-filled
- Bacterial infection in bloodstream
- Rapid drop in blood pressure (shock)
- Death



If you have one or more at-risk conditions and develop symptoms, SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL TREATMENT.

AVOID WOUND INFECTION

- Eliminate or minimize exposure to seawater (especially in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic)
- Protect wounds from seawater and avoid punctures, scrapes, or cuts while fishing and handling raw seafood
- Wear protective gloves and eyewear when shucking oysters

BEYOND WOUND INFECTION

The second major cause of *Vibrio vulnificus* infections in the high-risk groups listed earlier is the eating of raw or undercooked oysters, clams, or mussels. The death rate from *Vibrio vulnificus* infections through ingestion ranges from 50 - 61%. If you are a member of an at-risk group:

- Eat cooked seafood; avoid eating raw or undercooked oysters, clams and mussels
- Do not contaminate cooked seafood with seawater or juices from raw seafood

If you are unsure of your risk, consult your doctor.



Marine Extension and
Georgia Sea Grant
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

