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What you should know about Vibrio bacteria

MOBILE, Alabama — Vibrio bacteria naturally live in certain coastal waters and are present in higher concentrations when water temperatures are warmer. Approximately 80 percent of infections occur between the months of May and October.

About a dozen Vibrio species can cause human illness, known as vibriosis. The most common species causing human illness in the United States are *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*, *Vibrio vulnificus* and *Vibrio alginolyticus*.

Most people become infected by eating raw or undercooked shellfish, particularly oysters. Certain Vibrio species can also cause a skin infection when an open wound is exposed to saltwater or brackish water. Brackish water is a mixture of fresh and saltwater.

People with compromised immune systems, especially those with chronic liver disease, are more likely to get vibriosis. The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) estimates that vibriosis causes 80,000 illnesses each year in the United States and 100 deaths. About 52,000 of these illnesses are estimated to be the result of eating contaminated food.

There were three vibriosis cases reported to the Mobile County Health Department in 2018. They were all from exposure in water.

Most people with a mild case of vibriosis recover after about three days with no lasting effects. However, people with a *Vibrio vulnificus* infection can get seriously ill and need intensive care or limb amputation. About one in five people with this type of infection die, sometimes within a day or two of becoming ill.

To reduce your chance of getting vibriosis, do not eat raw or undercooked shellfish. If you have a wound (including cuts and scrapes), avoid contact with saltwater or brackish water or cover the wound with a waterproof bandage if there is a possibility it could come into contact with saltwater or brackish water, raw seafood or raw seafood juices.

The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) has issued a news release titled "Do not enter bodies of water if you have cuts or abrasions; if injured, clean wound at once to reduce risk of infection." Here is the link: http://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/news/2018/06/15.html/

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