

**Mission:**

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



**Rick Scott**  
Governor

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State Surgeon General & Secretary

**Vision:** To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

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**FIRST CONFIRMED CASE OF *Vibrio vulnificus* IN ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FL**

**PENSACOLA, FL** – The Florida Department of Health in Escambia County (DOH-Escambia) has confirmed the first case of *Vibrio vulnificus* in an Escambia County resident this year. The bacterium was identified by means of a wound culture.

The Florida Department of Health in Escambia County urges residents to avoid eating raw oysters and exposing open wounds to seawater and estuarine water that may harbor the bacteria called *Vibrio vulnificus*. Occurring naturally in the warm waters, particularly during the warm summer months, *Vibrio vulnificus* has the potential to cause serious illness.

Symptoms of *Vibrio vulnificus* wound infections typically include swelling, pain, and redness at the wound site. Both gastrointestinal and wound infections may cause nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhea, fever, chills, and the formation of blistering skin lesions. Individuals experiencing these symptoms should contact a physician immediately for diagnosis and treatment.

Those with liver damage due to excessive drinking and individuals with liver disease, including Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and cirrhosis, are most at risk for developing serious illness from *Vibrio vulnificus*. Other at-risk health conditions include hemochromatosis (iron overload), diabetes, cancer, stomach disorders, or any illness or treatment that weakens the immune system such as chemotherapy or radiation therapy. At-risk individuals are more likely to become extremely ill or die from eating raw oysters containing these bacteria. People in these high-risk groups are also at risk of serious illness if they have wounds, cuts, or scratches and wade in estuarine areas or seawater where the bacteria might be present. Individuals living without these conditions can become ill from eating raw oysters containing these bacteria and from exposing open wounds to sea and estuarine waters, although their illnesses tend to be less severe.

DOH investigates all reported cases of *Vibrio vulnificus* in Florida. When cases result from food exposure, the Department works with regulatory agencies to identify the seafood's harvest area. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is also notified and may shut down the harvest area and recall seafood if multiple incidents emerge from the same location.

Thoroughly cooking oysters, either by frying, stewing, or roasting eliminates harmful bacteria and viruses in the meat. Consuming raw oysters that have undergone a post-harvest treatment process to eliminate the bacteria can also reduce the risk of illness. Avoiding exposure of open wounds to seawater and estuarine water reduces the risk of wound infections.

The Florida Department of Health in Escambia County works to protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county, & community efforts. Additional information on *Vibrio vulnificus* can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/vibriov/index.html>. Media releases and other local information can be found at [www.EscambiaHealth.com](http://www.EscambiaHealth.com).

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