

**Mission:**

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



**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS**  
State Surgeon General & Secretary

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

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**HEALTH OFFICIALS CONFIRM VIBRIO VULNIFICUS CASE IN ESCAMBIA COUNTY**

*~ Floridians Urged to Take Precautions to Stay Healthy, Safe ~*

**PENSACOLA, FL** – The Florida Department of Health in Escambia County has confirmed a case of *Vibrio vulnificus* infection. This brings the total number of confirmed *Vibrio vulnificus* cases in Escambia County to two, and in Florida to 37, during 2013.

*Vibrio vulnificus* is a bacterium that normally lives in warm, brackish seawater. Since it is naturally found in warm marine waters, people with open wounds can be exposed to *Vibrio vulnificus* through direct contact with seawater. Also, *Vibrio vulnificus* can cause disease in those who eat raw shellfish. *Vibrio vulnificus* infections are rare, with an average of 30 people diagnosed with the disease each year in Florida.

Healthy individuals typically develop a mild disease; however *Vibrio vulnificus* infections can be a serious concern for people who have weakened immune systems, particularly those with chronic liver disease. They are more likely to develop *Vibrio vulnificus* bloodstream infections than healthy people.

Symptoms of *Vibrio vulnificus* can include vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal pain. Wound infection can lead to skin breakdown and blistering. In persons who have weakened immune systems, particularly those with chronic liver disease, *Vibrio vulnificus* can invade the bloodstream, causing a severe and life-threatening illness with symptoms like fever, chills, decreased blood pressure (septic shock) and blistering skin lesions. Individuals experiencing these symptoms should contact a physician immediately for diagnosis and treatment. Individuals with wound infections should also seek care promptly.

“It is important for people to be vigilant of these symptoms, and seek immediate medical care.” said Dr. John Lanza, Director of the Florida Department of Health in Escambia County. “Residents and visitors should also avoid consuming raw and undercooked shellfish as well as foods that have come into contact with raw seafood.”

**TIPS TO STAY HEALTHY AND SAFE**

Floridians should thoroughly cook oysters, either by frying, stewing, or roasting to eliminate 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 works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

For more information, please contact the Florida Department of Health in Escambia County at 850-595-6683, or visit [www.EscambiaHealth.com](http://www.EscambiaHealth.com).

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