

**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 ENCOURAGE AWARENESS OF POTENTIAL BACTERIA IN COASTAL WATERS**

**TALLAHASSEE** – The Florida Department of Health urges Floridians with certain health conditions to avoid eating raw oysters and exposing open wounds to seawater and estuarine water, which may harbor bacteria called *Vibrio vulnificus*. Occurring naturally in the warm coastal waters, particularly during the summer months, *Vibrio vulnificus* has the potential to cause serious illness.

Persons who have wounds, cuts or scratches and wade in estuarine areas or seawater where the bacteria might be present can become ill. Symptoms of *Vibrio vulnificus* in wound infections typically include swelling, pain and redness at the wound site.

Other symptoms of *Vibrio vulnificus* infection include; 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.

Individuals with liver disease, including Hepatitis C and cirrhosis, are most at risk for developing serious illness from *Vibrio vulnificus* obtained from eating raw oysters. Others who should avoid consuming raw shellfish are those with hemochromatosis (iron overload), diabetes, cancer, stomach disorders or any illness or treatment that weakens the immune system. 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.

A total of 41 cases of *Vibrio vulnificus* were reported during 2013 and to date this year there have been six cases, four due to the infection of an open wound and two from consuming raw shellfish. For more information, please view this *Vibrio vulnificus* fact sheet: <http://newsroom.doh.state.fl.us/wp-content/uploads/newsroom/2013/10/FAQflyerwloqo.pdf>

The Florida Department of Health works to protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county, & community efforts.

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