

DID YOU KNOW....?

Each year millions of Americans enjoy eating raw molluscan shellfish--especially oysters and clams. But if you have **liver disease, diabetes**, or a **weak immune system**, raw oysters or clams containing the bacteria ***Vibrio vulnificus*** can make you seriously ill. You can avoid illness simply by:

- ❑ Eating only oysters or clams that have been thoroughly cooked
- ❑ Eating raw oysters or clams **only** if they are treated and labeled “Processed to reduce *Vibrio vulnificus* to non-detectable levels”

WHAT IS

VIBRIO VULNIFICUS?

Vibrio vulnificus is a bacteria that can cause severe illness or death to at-risk people who eat raw oysters or clams.

From 1989 to 2000, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recorded 282 serious illnesses associated with consumption of raw oysters and clams containing the *Vibrio vulnificus* bacteria. While illnesses are infrequent, about half (149) have resulted in death.

WHERE IS IT FOUND?

Vibrio vulnificus is found naturally in warm coastal waters, such as the Gulf of Mexico, where levels of the bacteria are elevated during the summer months. *Vibrio vulnificus* is **NOT** a result of pollution, and can be found in waters approved for oyster and clam harvesting. *Vibrio vulnificus* does **NOT** change the appearance, taste, or odor of oysters or clams.

ARE YOU AT RISK?

You are at risk of serious illness if you eat raw oysters or clams and have any of these health conditions:

- ❑ **Liver disease** (from hepatitis, cirrhosis, alcoholism, or cancer)
- ❑ **Iron overload disease** (hemochromatosis)
- ❑ **Diabetes**
- ❑ **Cancer** (including lymphoma, leukemia, Hodgkin's disease)
- ❑ **Stomach disorders**
- ❑ **Or any illness or medical treatment that weakens the body's immune system**

Unsure of your risk? Ask your doctor.

Healthy people are not at risk of serious infection.

HOW CAN YOU AVOID INFECTION?

If you are at risk, raw or undercooked oysters or clams containing *Vibrio vulnificus* can make you sick.

You can also become infected if these bacteria enter your body through an open wound while swimming.

To safeguard your health, take these precautions:

- ❑ **EAT** oysters or clams that have been **THOROUGHLY COOKED**--heat destroys the bacteria
- ❑ **EAT** raw oysters or clams **ONLY** if they are treated and labeled “Processed to reduce *Vibrio vulnificus* to non-detectable levels”
- ❑ **NEVER** swim or wade in seawater when you have sores or open wounds