

Vibrio parahaemolyticus gastroenteritis

Vibrio parahaemolyticus is a germ that can infect the bowel. This can cause diarrhoea (runny poo) and nausea (feeling sick). This type of illness is called gastroenteritis.

Some people with vibrio parahaemolyticus gastroenteritis may become dehydrated. The illness can be dangerous for very young people, older people, or those with other health problems that make them vulnerable (such as those who are immunocompromised).

If you are unwell and have diarrhoea and nausea your doctor may ask you to send a sample of faeces (poo) to test it for vibrio parahaemolyticus, among other germs.

People from New Zealand are most likely to catch vibrio parahaemolyticus from consuming raw seafood that has been contaminated or not stored at the proper temperature.

How it is spread

- From eating food or drinking water infected by the vibrio parahaemolyticus germ.
- The most common source is raw seafood such as shellfish (oysters, mussels, etc.).

It is very rarely passed from person to person directly.

How to reduce your risk of getting vibrio parahaemolyticus gastroenteritis

The best way to reduce your risk of getting vibrio parahaemolyticus gastroenteritis is to ensure seafood is refrigerated and stored properly, cooked thoroughly before consumption, and that you wash your hands properly.

Those at greater risk of becoming very unwell from vibrio parahaemolyticus gastroenteritis should completely avoid eating raw or undercooked fish and shellfish. This includes children and young people, older people, pregnant women and those who are immunocompromised.

Symptoms

Symptoms can include:

- diarrhoea
- upset stomach and vomiting
- fever

Symptoms usually start one to two days after you are infected, but can occur any time up to three days later. They tend to last for one to seven days

If you have symptoms contact your doctor, or call Healthline on 0800 611 116. If your doctor thinks you have vibrio parahaemolyticus gastroenteritis they will ask for a sample of your faeces for testing.

You will need to drink plenty of water so you do not become dehydrated, and you will require plenty of rest.

What happens if you test positive

If you have vibrio parahaemolyticus gastroenteritis you will need to stay home from work, school or day care. You can return after you have been symptom free for at least 48 hours (two days). This will reduce the risk of you passing it on to others.

People you live with or have recently had close contact with should look out for symptoms. This is particularly important amongst those who ate the same food as you before you became unwell. If they develop symptoms they should contact their doctor, or they can call Healthline for free on 0800 611 116.

Reducing the risk to others

To reduce the risk of passing on vibrio parahaemolyticus gastroenteritis you should also:

- Ensure no one else eats any of the leftover food that may have caused the illness (or food that may have come into contact with that food).
- Wash your hands with soapy water for 20 seconds, then dry well with a clean cloth or paper towel every time:
 - after going to the toilet
 - before preparing food, eating or drinking
 - before and after changing babies nappies or holding a baby
- Avoid sharing food, drinks, spoons and straws.
- Anyone who has diarrhoea should not use a pool or swim in a pond while sick.
- Be extra careful around babies and small children, even if they are in nappies.

If you still have the food that you think may have caused your illness, you should keep it until you speak with the public health unit in your area. Samples of the food may be tested to confirm if this is what made you unwell. If it is not required for testing you can throw it away.

How to collect, store and cook shellfish safely

For more information on collecting, storing and cooking shellfish safely visit: <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/food-safety-home/food-poisoning-symptoms-causes/vibrio-bacteria/>