

STORM PREPAREDNESS

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VIBRIO VULNIFICUS

Following a storm, flood waters and standing waters pose health risks, including infectious diseases such as *Vibrio vulnificus*. It's important to take precautions against infection and illness following any storm.

Vibrio vulnificus is a bacterium that usually lives in warm, brackish sea water. These bacteria typically grow faster during warmer months and flooding, may increase bacteria levels.

It is important to never wade in flood waters or standing water following a storm. People with open wounds, cuts, or scratches may be exposed to *Vibrio vulnificus* through direct contact with flood water, sea water, or brackish water. *Vibrio vulnificus* can also cause disease in those who eat raw or undercooked oysters and shellfish. *Vibrio vulnificus* is not spread person-to-person. Infections may be severe for people with weakened immune systems, especially people who have chronic liver disease or take medications that lowers the body's ability to fight germs.

Vibrio vulnificus can invade the bloodstream, causing a severe life-threatening illness with symptoms such as fever, chills, decreased blood pressure (septic shock), and skin lesions. If you are experiencing of these symptoms, or wound infections, seek medical attention immediately.

Use the following tips to stay healthy and safe:

- If you have open wounds, cuts, or scratches, stay out of flood water, standing water, sea water, and brackish water, if possible. If you're exposed to these potential contaminants, wear protective gear to protect yourself from bacteria exposure.
- Immediately clean and monitor wounds and cuts thoroughly with soap and clean running water or bottled water, after any contact with flood water, standing water, sea water, brackish water, or raw/undercooked seafood and its juices.
- Cover your wounds with a waterproof bandage if it could come in contact with flood water, standing water, sea water, or brackish water.
- Seek immediate medical care if a wound develops redness, swelling or oozing, or other signs of infection such as fever, increasing pain, shortness of breath, fast or high heart rate, confusion, or disorientation.