

# Vibrio

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This sheet is about exposure to *Vibrio* in a pregnancy or while breastfeeding. This information is based on published research studies. It should not take the place of medical care and advice from your healthcare provider.

## **What is Vibrio?**

*Vibrio* is a bacteria that lives in warm coastal seawater. There are many different kinds of *Vibrio* bacteria. Each kind can cause a different illness. Sometimes the illness related to vibrio infection is called Vibriosis. It is commonly called *Vibrio* for short.

Some *Vibrio* bacteria will cause only mild stomachaches and mild diarrhea. This type of infection is not usually dangerous. However, it is important to drink plenty of fluids to help prevent side effects of dehydration (not having enough water in the body). See a healthcare provider if symptoms become severe or last a long time.

Other *Vibrio* bacteria can cause severe diarrhea, vomiting, fever, and/or wound infections that can be life-threatening. If a wound is infected with *Vibrio*, the area around the wound can become red and swollen. The bacteria from the wound can enter the blood and cause fevers, chills, and blisters. If this infection is not treated, it could turn into a serious infection.

Cholera, a very severe form of diarrhea, is caused by two specific groups of *Vibrio cholerae*. These groups of *Vibrio cholerae* are not usually found in the United States, so the chance of someone in the United States getting cholera is very low.

## **How do you get a Vibrio infection?**

Most people get *Vibrio* by eating raw or undercooked shellfish. MotherToBaby has a fact sheet on this topic here: <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/eating-raw-undercooked-or-cold-meats-and-seafood/>. Other people can get infected if an open wound comes into contact with water that contains *Vibrio* bacteria.

People usually get sick from *Vibrio* 1 to 3 days after exposure. People who have liver disease or a weak immune system are much more likely to become very ill from a *Vibrio* infection.

## **How can I protect myself from a Vibrio infection?**

Seafood:

Eating raw or undercooked seafood and shellfish (like oysters) has been associated with vibrio infection. Fully cooking seafood before eating it is a good way to prevent infection. Keep other foods away from raw seafood/shellfish and its juices/drippings to avoid possible contamination. If you are at increased risk for infection, wear gloves when handling raw seafood/shellfish.

Open Wounds:

If you have an open wound or cut, stay out of coastal (beach) water if possible. If you must enter the water, cover the wound with a bandage. Even a scrape in the skin can be an opening for the *Vibrio* bacteria to enter. If a wound is exposed to coastal water, wash the area with soap and clean water as soon as possible. If *Vibrio* bacteria are active in floodwater, the bacteria can no longer survive once the waters have dried.

## **How can I find out if I have a Vibrio Infection?**

A healthcare provider can test a sample of stool (poop) for *Vibrio*. *Vibrio* infection can also be confirmed by testing the blood or wound.

## **I have Vibrio. Can it make it harder for me to get pregnant?**

Studies have not been done to see if *Vibrio* can make it harder to get pregnant.

### **Does having/getting *Vibrio* increase the chance of miscarriage?**

Miscarriage is common and can occur in any pregnancy for many different reasons. Studies have not been done to see if *Vibrio* increases the chance of miscarriage.

### **Does having/getting *Vibrio* increase the chance of birth defects?**

Birth defects can happen in any pregnancy for different reasons. Out of all babies born each year, about 3 out of 100 (3%) will have a birth defect. We look at research studies to try to understand if an exposure, like *Vibrio*, might increase the chance of birth defects in a pregnancy. Studies have not been done to see if *Vibrio* can increase the chance of birth defects.

Fever is a possible symptom of *Vibrio*. A high fever in the first trimester can increase the chance of certain birth defects. For more information see the MotherToBaby fact sheet about on Fever/Hyperthermia at: <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/hyperthermia-pregnancy/>.

### **Would having/getting *Vibrio* increase the chance of other pregnancy related problems?**

Studies have not been done to see if *Vibrio* increases the chance for pregnancy-related problems such as preterm delivery (birth before week 37) or low birth weight (weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces [2500 grams] at birth).

Some symptoms of a *Vibrio* infection, like diarrhea and vomiting, can lead to dehydration. Dehydration during pregnancy can increase the chance for low amniotic fluid and preterm delivery (birth before week 37).

### **Does having/getting *Vibrio* in pregnancy affect future behavior or learning for the child?**

Studies have not been done to see if *Vibrio* infection in pregnancy can cause behavior or learning issues for the child.

### **Breastfeeding while I have *Vibrio*:**

Breast milk may help protect babies from many kinds of bacteria like *Vibrio*. One study has suggested that breastfeeding helped to reduce the risk of cholera, an infection caused by *Vibrio* bacteria, in the infant whose mom was sick with a *Vibrio* infection. Another study suggested that a common probiotic (bacteria) in breast milk helped to reduce the growth of *Vibrio cholerae*. Therefore, it may not be necessary to stop breastfeeding with a *Vibrio* infection.

If you are breastfeeding and think you have a *Vibrio* infection, or think your baby has symptoms (fever, vomiting, or diarrhea) please speak with your and your child's healthcare providers. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all of your breastfeeding questions.

### **If a man has *Vibrio*, can it affect his fertility or increase the chance of birth defects?**

Studies have not been done to see if *Vibrio* could affect a man's fertility (ability to make healthy sperm) or increase the chance of birth defects. In general, exposures that men have are unlikely to increase the risks to a pregnancy. For more information, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet Paternal Exposures at <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/paternal-exposures-pregnancy/>.

Please click [here](#) for references.

**Questions? Call 866.626.6847 | Text 855.999.3525 | Email or Chat at [MotherToBaby.org](https://www.MotherToBaby.org).**

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