

Vibrio and Oysters



Many people enjoy eating raw oysters, and raw oyster bars are popping up at some of the trendiest restaurants. But eating raw oysters and other undercooked seafood can put you at risk for infections, including vibriosis, which is caused by certain strains of *Vibrio* bacteria.

Vibrio bacteria naturally inhabit coastal waters where oysters live. Because oysters feed by filtering water, bacteria can concentrate in their tissues. When someone eats raw or undercooked oysters, viruses or bacteria that may be in the oyster can cause illness.

You can get very sick from eating raw oysters.

Raw Oysters and Norovirus

If eaten raw, [oysters and other filter-feeding shellfish](#) can contain viruses and bacteria that can cause illness or death. Anyone who consumes raw shellfish is at risk of contracting norovirus. Children younger than five years old, the elderly, and those people with weakened immune systems are more likely to have severe infections. Food contaminated with norovirus may look, smell, or taste normal. To avoid food poisoning from oysters, cook them well to a temperature of at least 145 degrees F.

Symptoms of norovirus

The most common symptoms are:

- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Nausea
- Stomach pain

- A person usually develops symptoms 12 to 48 hours after being exposed to norovirus. Most people with norovirus illness get better within 1 to 3 days.
- With this illness, there is a risk of dehydration, so call a healthcare provider right away if young children, older people, or anyone getting sick seems dehydrated.

Follow these steps to protect yourself and others from norovirus:

- Cook oysters and other shellfish thoroughly before eating them (at least 145 degrees); quick steaming is not enough.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water often.
- Carefully wash fruits and vegetables before preparing and eating them.
- Do not prepare food or care for others when you are sick, and for at least two days after symptoms stop.
- Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces. Wash contaminated laundry thoroughly.