



Health Public Safety

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## Following Death in Suffolk County Tied to Rare Vibrio Vulnificus Bacteria, Governor Hochul Updates New Yorkers on Public Health Precautions and Ongoing Preparedness Efforts

New York State Department of Health Has Issued Guidance To Providers On Best Practices To Treat And Identify Cases

Vibrio Vulnificus Bacteria, Which Can Cause Skin Breakdown and Ulcers, Has Been Identified In A Recently Deceased Individual From Suffolk County

[Traducción al español](#)

Governor Kathy Hochul today announced that vibriosis, a rare but potentially fatal bacterial infection that can cause skin breakdown and ulcers, has been identified in a recently deceased individual from Suffolk County. Fatal cases of vibriosis have also been identified in Connecticut. The Governor urged New Yorkers to learn how to avoid exposure and to take appropriate precautions, as the New York State Department of Health reminded providers to consider vibriosis when diagnosing wound infections or sepsis of unknown origins.

“While rare, the vibrio bacteria has unfortunately made it to this region and can be extraordinarily dangerous,” **Governor Hochul said.** “As we investigate further, it is critical that all New Yorkers stay vigilant and take responsible precautions to keep themselves and their loved ones safe, including protecting open wounds from seawater and for those with compromised immune systems, avoiding raw or undercooked shellfish which may carry the bacteria.”

Vibriosis is caused by several species of bacteria, including the Vibrio vulnificus bacteria, which occurs naturally in saltwater coastal environments and can be found in higher concentrations from May to October when the weather is warmer. Infection with vibriosis can cause a range of symptoms when ingested, including diarrhea, stomach cramps, vomiting, fever and chills. Exposure can also result in ear infections and cause sepsis and life-threatening wound infections.

The death in Suffolk County is still being investigated to determine if the bacteria was encountered in New York waters or elsewhere. In the meantime, the New York State Department of Health this week reminded health care providers to consider vibrio vulnificus when seeing individuals with severe wound infections or sepsis with or without wound infections.

**New York State Health Commissioner Dr. James McDonald said,** “We are reminding providers to be on the lookout for cases of vibriosis, which is not often the first diagnosis that comes to mind. We are also suggesting to New Yorkers that if you have wounds, you should avoid swimming in warm seawater. And, if you have a compromised immune system, you should also avoid handling or eating raw seafood that could also carry the bacteria.”

**Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone said,** “While we continue to investigate the source of this rare infection, it is important for residents to remain aware and vigilant on precautions that can be taken. As always, if any residents have health concerns we encourage them to contact their health care provider.”

While anyone can get vibriosis, those with liver disease, cancer or a weakened immune system or people taking medicine to decrease stomach acid levels may be more likely to get an infection or develop complications when infected.

To help prevent vibriosis, people with a wound, such as a cut or scrape, a recent piercing or tattoo, should avoid exposing skin to warm seawater in coastal environments or cover the wound with a waterproof bandage. In addition, those with compromised immune systems should avoid eating raw or undercooked shellfish, such as oysters, which can carry the bacteria. Wear gloves when handling raw shellfish and thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water when finished.

More [information about vibriosis can be found here.](#)

## Contact the Governor’s Press Office

Contact us by phone:

Albany: [\(518\) 474-8418](tel:5184748418)  
New York City: [\(212\) 681-4640](tel:2126814640)

Contact us by email:

[Press.Office@exc.ny.gov](mailto:Press.Office@exc.ny.gov)

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