



For Immediate Release

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For More Information:

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**DPH WARNS RESIDENTS IN SHORELINE AREAS OF
CONNECTICUT OF ILLNESS CAUSED BY BACTERIA IN
SALT OR BRACKISH WATER**

**UNUSUAL NUMBER OF INFECTIONS CAUSED BY *VIBRIO VULNIFICUS* SINCE JULY
PROMPTS WARNING**

Hartford – The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) is warning residents in shoreline areas about the potential dangers of exposure to salt or brackish water along Long Island Sound, due to an unusually high number of infections caused by bacteria in the water. Since July, five cases of *Vibrio vulnificus* infections have been reported to DPH (one infection in July, four in August). The patients are from Fairfield (1), Middlesex (1), and New Haven (3) counties and are between 49 – 85 years of age (median 73); 4 are male, 1 female. Two patients had septicemia (infection of the bloodstream) and three had serious wound infections. All five cases patients were hospitalized. No deaths have been reported. All five cases reported exposure to salt or brackish water during activities such as swimming, crabbing, and boating. All five patients had pre-existing wounds or sustained new wounds during these activities which led to the *Vibrio* infections.

“The identification of these five cases over two months is very concerning,” said Dr. Matthew Cartter, State Epidemiologist for DPH. “This suggests the *Vibrio* bacteria may be present in salt or brackish water in or near Long Island Sound, and people should take precautions.”

Vibrio vulnificus infection is an extremely rare illness. In the past 10 years, between 2010 – 2019, only seven cases were reported in Connecticut. *V. vulnificus* can cause wound infections when open wounds are exposed to warm salt or brackish water (mix of salt and fresh water). The bacteria, once inside the body, can infect the bloodstream causing septicemia. People with a *V. vulnificus* infection can get seriously ill and need intensive care or limb amputation. About 1 in 5 people with this type of *Vibrio* infection die, sometimes within a day or two of becoming ill. People at greatest risk for illness from *V. vulnificus* are those with weakened immune systems and the elderly.

You can reduce your chance of getting a *Vibrio* wound infection by following these tips:

- If you have a wound (including from a recent surgery, piercing, or tattoo), stay out of saltwater or brackish water, if possible. This includes wading at the beach.

- Cover your wound with a waterproof bandage if it could come into contact with saltwater, brackish water, or raw or undercooked seafood and its juices. This contact can happen during everyday activities, such as swimming, fishing, or walking on the beach.
- Wash wounds and cuts thoroughly with soap and water after they have contact with saltwater, brackish water, raw seafood, or its juices.

For more information on *V. vulnificus* infections, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/vibrio/wounds.html>

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