



Health Advisory

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FOOD POISONING FROM EATING RAW OYSTERS

**ALAMEDA COUNTY HEALTH OFFICIALS ADVISE
CONSUMERS NOT TO EAT RAW OYSTERS OR CLAMS**

The California Department of Health Services (CDHS) is continuing to investigate numerous cases of *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* (*Vp*), a gastrointestinal illness associated with the consumption of raw or undercooked oysters. Many of these cases have been linked to specific growing areas in Washington. Seven confirmed cases have been reported to the Alameda County Health Department. Although some remain under investigation, all but one reported eating raw or undercooked oysters.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- If you have recently eaten raw oysters and are suffering from gastrointestinal illness, please see your physician for treatment. Symptoms include diarrhea, vomiting and abdominal cramps. While *Vp* can cause mild illness in healthy individuals, older persons and those with weak immune systems are at greater risk for more serious illness, such as septicemia (infection of the blood stream).
- Consumers are advised to thoroughly cook oysters harvested from that area before eating. Cooking destroys the bacteria, eliminating the risk of illness.
- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is advising consumers to avoid eating raw oysters as a result of finding recently harvested oysters from the state of Washington contaminated with *Vp*.

INFORMATION

Consumers can continue to enjoy oysters in cooked preparations by following this advice:

- At restaurants and other foodservice establishments, order oysters fully cooked.
- Purchase oysters with the shells closed. Throw away oysters with shells already opened.
- For oysters in shells:
 - Boil oysters until the shells open. Once open, boil for an additional 3-5 minutes.
 - Or, steam oysters by adding them to water that is already steaming and cook until the shells open. Once open, steam for another 4-9 minutes.

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- Use smaller pots to steam or boil oysters. Using larger pots or cooking too many oysters at one time may cause uneven heat distribution that may cause some of the oysters to be undercooked.
- Discard any oysters that do not open during cooking.
- For shucked oysters:
 - Boil or simmer for at least 3 minutes or until the edges curl
 - Or, fry at 375 degrees for at least 3 minutes
 - Or, bake at 450 degrees for 10 minutes.

ADDITONAL INFORMATION

- August 4 2006 Alameda County Public Health Department Health Alerts:
<http://www.acphd.org/AXBVCZ/Admin/Publications/ACPHDHealthAlert.htm>
- August 4 2006 CDHS Health Warning:
<http://www.applications.dhs.ca.gov/pressreleases/store/pressreleases/06-59.html>
- August 1 2006 FDA News: <http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2006/NEW01422.html>

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