



Shellfish Poisoning

Fact Sheet



Shellfish poisoning (SP) is caused by eating seafood contaminated with specific biotoxins (poison). This happens when certain algae grow out of control and produce high levels of biotoxins. This is sometimes called harmful algal blooms or red tide. These natural toxins pollute the water and some seafood. This can include mussels, clams, cockles, oysters, sea snails, scallops, crabs, and lobsters.

Contaminated seafood usually looks, smells, and tastes normal.

There are many types of shellfish poisoning including Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning (ASP), Diarrhetic Shellfish Poisoning (DSP), and Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP).

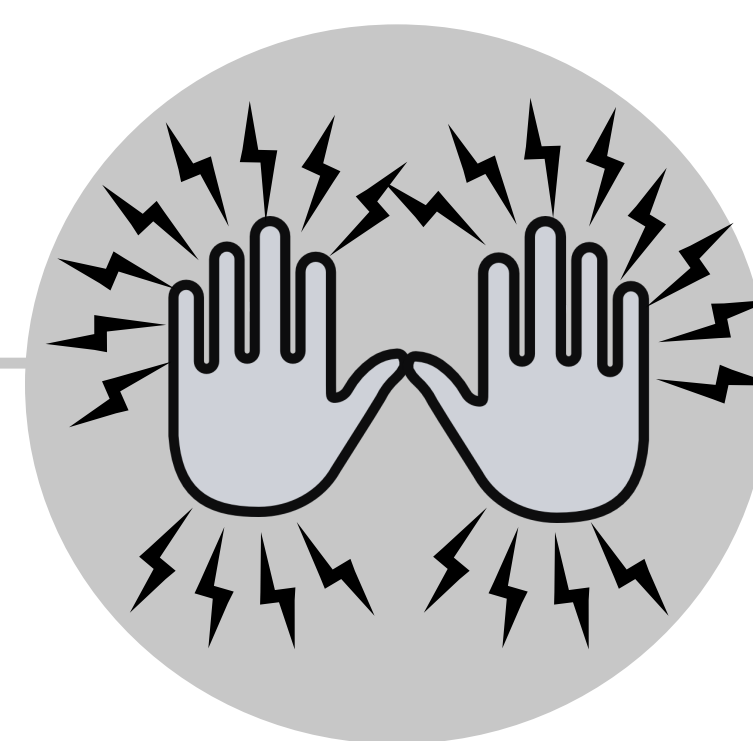
Signs and Symptoms



Nausea and Vomiting



Diarrhea



Numbness and Tingling in the Face, Mouth, and Hands



Loss of Muscle Coordination

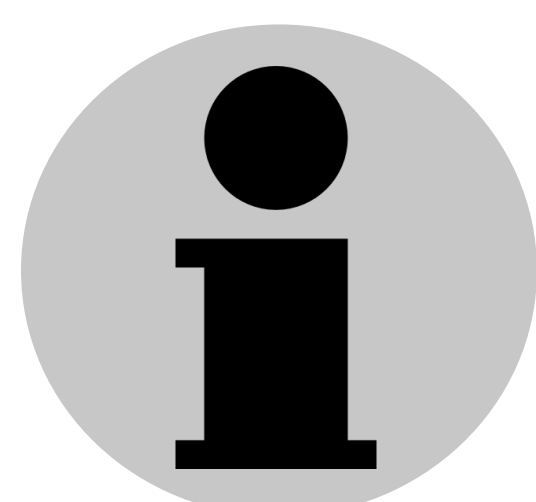
Few people experience all of these symptoms. Signs and symptoms vary based on the type of toxin. Symptoms can begin within minutes to a few hours, but no later than 24 hours, after eating the contaminated shellfish. Symptoms usually resolve within three days. In extreme cases, seizures, confusion, memory loss, respiratory failure, paralysis, or death can occur. There is no treatment, only supportive care for symptoms.

Prevention



- Check the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) for algal blooms advisories and closures at www.maine.gov/dmr/shellfish-sanitation-management/.
- Do not eat fish sold as bait. Bait does not need to meet the same food safety regulations as fish sold for human consumption.
- Cooking, freezing, salting, or smoking shellfish will not destroy toxins.
- Only harvest shellfish from approved locations.
- Eat shellfish from certified dealers only.
- Do not eat lobster tomalley or crab tomalley.

For More Information



Talk to your doctor if you think you have shellfish poisoning. You can also call Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention at 1-800-821-5821 for more information.

You can also visit www.cdc.gov/habs/illness-symptoms-marine.html.