

Fish / Shellfish Poisoning

What is Fish/Shellfish Poisoning?

Fish and Shellfish have naturally occurring toxins in them which when we consume them can make us ill. Not all fish and shellfish have these toxins and you are unable to detect them from the smell or taste of the product.

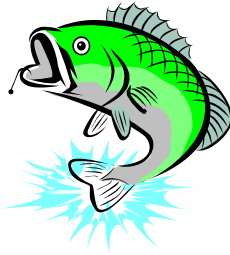
There are controls in place to try to minimise the risk of eating a fish or shellfish with a high level of toxin, for example, during the period of greatest risk (between April and September) notices are posted in areas with high PSP, DSP and ASP levels warning people not to eat shellfish caught locally. Fishing may also be prohibited. Testing of a small number of Fish and Shellfish is also undertaken where the catch is landed to check levels of toxins.

If you are unlucky enough to suffer poisoning from Fish or shellfish, checks can be made to ensure the products have been brought from a reputable supplier and they are stored and cooked properly.

Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP)

In the summer certain types of marine Algae produce poisons called Saxitoxin. These specific algae have a red-brown colour, and can grow to such numbers that they cause red streaks to appear in the ocean called "red tides." As shellfish feed on the algae, the toxins can reach high concentrations, which effect humans when the shellfish have been eaten.

Shellfish affected: Mussels, Clams, Oysters, Scallops, and Crabs.



Symptoms

Symptoms begin anywhere from 15 minutes to 10 hours after eating the contaminated shellfish, although usually within 2 hours. Symptoms are generally mild, and begin with numbness or tingling of the face, arms, and legs. This is followed by headache, dizziness, nausea, and muscular in coordination. Patients sometimes describe a floating sensation. In cases of severe poisoning, muscle paralysis and respiratory failure occur, and in these cases death may occur in 2 to 25 hours. The length of the illness depends on the level of toxin eaten.

Diarrhetic Shellfish Poisoning (DSP)

Certain types of marine Algae produce poisons called Okadaic Acid and related compounds. Which get concentrated by shellfish when they feed on the algae.

Shellfish affected: Bivalve Shellfish and Crustacea.

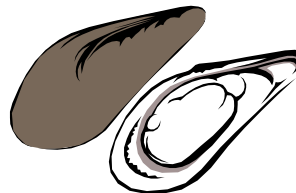
Symptoms

Symptoms are diarrhoea, nausea, and vomiting and abdominal pain. Acute symptoms usually occur within 12 hours and are of short duration.

Neurotoxic shellfish poisoning

Neurotoxic shellfish poisoning is caused by toxins produced by certain types of marine Algae that occasionally accumulate in Shellfish as they feed.

Shellfish affected: Oysters, clams, and mussels from the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic coast of the southern states.



Symptoms

Symptoms begin 1 to 3 hours after eating the contaminated shellfish. The toxin attacks the nervous system and symptoms include difficulty in swallowing, double vision, unsteadiness and tremor, numbness, tingling in the mouth, arms and legs, in coordination, and gastrointestinal upset. As in ciguatera poisoning, some patients report temperature reversal. Death is rare. Recovery normally occurs in 2 to 3 days.

Amnesic shellfish poisoning

Amnesic shellfish poisoning is a rare syndrome caused by a toxin called Domoic Acid produced by certain types of marine Algae. The toxin accumulates in shellfish as they feed if it is present in the water.

Shellfish affected: Mussels and contaminated shellfish.

Symptoms

Gastrointestinal distress within 24 hours and neurological difficulties within 48 hours of eating contaminated Shellfish. Other reported symptoms have included dizziness, headache, disorientation, and permanent short-term memory loss. severe poisoning, seizures, focal weakness or paralysis, and death may occur.



Scombotoxin Fish Poisoning

Scombrototoxic fish poisoning also known as scombroid or histamine fish poisoning. It is caused by high levels of a chemical called histidine which once the fish is caught spoilage bacteria begins to turn into Histamine.



Fish affected: Tuna, mackerel, bonito, and, rarely, other fish.

Symptoms

Symptoms begin within 2 minutes to 2 hours after eating the fish. The most common symptoms are: rash, diarrhoea, flushing, sweating, headache, and vomiting. Burning or swelling of the mouth, abdominal pain, or a metallic taste may also occur. The majority of patients have mild symptoms that resolve within a few hours. Treatment is generally unnecessary, but antihistamines or epinephrine may be needed in certain instances. Symptoms may be more severe in patients taking certain medications that slow the breakdown of histamine by their liver, such as isoniazide and doxycycline.

Ciguatera poisoning



Ciguatera is caused by eating contaminated tropical reef fish. Ciguatoxins that cause ciguatera poisoning are actually produced certain types of marine Algae. These toxins become concentrated as they move up the food chain from small fish to large fish that eat them, and reach particularly high concentrations in large predatory tropical reef fish.

Fish affected: Barracuda are commonly associated with ciguatoxin poisoning, but eating grouper, sea bass, snapper, mullet can also be affected.

Symptoms

Ciguatoxin usually causes symptoms within a few minutes to 3 hours after eating contaminated fish, and occasionally it may take up to 6 hours. Common non-specific symptoms include nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, cramps, excessive sweating, headache, and muscle aches. The sensation of burning or "pins-and-needles," weakness, itching, and dizziness can occur. Patients may experience reversal of temperature sensation in their mouth (hot surfaces feeling cold and cold, hot), unusual taste sensations, nightmares, or hallucinations. Ciguatera poisoning is rarely fatal. Symptoms usually clear in 1 to 4 weeks.

RUNNYMEDE BOROUGH COUNCIL



Information on Fish and Shellfish poisoning

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