



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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CDPH Warns Consumers Not to Eat Sport-Harvested Bivalve Shellfish from Mendocino County

SACRAMENTO - The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) advises consumers not to eat recreationally harvested mussels, clams or whole scallops from Mendocino County. Dangerous levels of paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) toxins have been detected in mussels from this region. The naturally occurring PSP toxins can cause illness or death in humans. Cooking does not destroy the toxin.

This warning does not apply to commercially sold clams, mussels, scallops or oysters from approved sources. State law permits only state-certified commercial shellfish harvesters or dealers to sell these products. Shellfish sold by certified harvesters and dealers are subject to frequent mandatory testing to monitor for toxins.

Since crabs eat bivalve shellfish they could accumulate some of the PSP toxin. While crab meat is not affected by the PSP toxin, consumers should avoid eating the viscera (the internal organs, also known as “butter” or “guts”) from crabs caught in the affected area. Water or broth used to cook whole crabs should be discarded and not used to prepare dishes such as sauces, broths, soups or stews (for example, cioppino or gumbo), stocks, roux, dressings or dips.

The best ways to reduce risk are to:

- Remove the crab viscera and rinse out the body cavity prior to cooking, or
- Boil or steam whole crabs, instead of frying or broiling, and discard the viscera and cooking liquids.

PSP toxins affect the central nervous system, producing a tingling around the mouth and fingertips within a few minutes to a few hours after eating toxic shellfish. These symptoms are typically followed by loss of balance, lack of muscular coordination, slurred speech and difficulty swallowing. In severe poisonings, complete muscular paralysis and death from asphyxiation can occur. There have been no reports of illnesses related to this event.

You can get the most current information on shellfish advisories and quarantines by calling CDPH's toll-free Shellfish Information Line at (800) 553-4133. For additional information, please visit the [CDPH Marine Biotxin Monitoring web page](#).

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