

Shell Fish Poisoning

FACT SHEET

What is Shellfish Poisoning?

In some coastal waters, shellfish eat a type of algae that contains a poison. When people eat the shellfish, they may become seriously ill.

Who Can Get Shellfish Poisoning?

Anyone who eats contaminated shellfish that contain the poisons can get shellfish poisoning. Normal boiling, steaming or any other method of cooking does NOT destroy the poison.

What are the Symptoms?

- Numbness and tingling around the lips and tongue
- Numbness and tingling in the hands and feet
- Muscle weakness, lack of muscle coordination
- Slurred speech
- Paralysis

These symptoms may lead to coma, breathing problems and death.

What is the Treatment?

There is no cure, antidote or vaccine for shellfish poisoning. If you suffer any of these symptoms after eating shellfish, contact your doctor or emergency centre immediately.

How Can You Prevent Shellfish Poisoning?

- Shellfish should only be bought and eaten from restaurants and markets or sources approved by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
- If you are planning to harvest shellfish, contact the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries to be sure the area is open to shellfish harvesting