

CDPH Warns Recreational Anglers to Avoid Consuming the Viscera of Dungeness Crab Caught North of Point Reyes

Date: 11/2/2016

Number: 16-068

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SACRAMENTO

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) today is warning recreational anglers not to consume the viscera (internal organs) of Dungeness crab caught in coastal waters north of Point Reyes, California. This warning is due to the sporadic detection of elevated levels of domoic acid in the viscera of Dungeness crabs caught off the Northern California coast.

This warning is effective for recreationally caught Dungeness crabs taken from state waters north of Latitude 38° 00' N. (near Point Reyes, CA).

CDPH believes that Dungeness crab **meat** is safe to consume, however, as a precaution, **consumers are advised not to eat the viscera (internal organs, also known as “butter” or “guts”) of crabs.**

Consumers should follow these preparation practices to ensure that they avoid any inadvertent exposure to domoic acid that might be sporadically found in some crab’s viscera.

When whole crabs are cooked in liquid, domoic acid can leach from the viscera into the cooking liquid. 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:

- 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 cooking liquids.

Symptoms of domoic acid poisoning can occur within 30 minutes to 24 hours after eating toxic seafood. In mild cases, symptoms may include vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramps, headache and dizziness. These symptoms disappear within several days. In severe cases, the victim may experience trouble breathing, confusion, disorientation, cardiovascular instability, seizures, excessive bronchial secretions, permanent loss of short-term memory (a condition known as Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning), coma or death. There have been no reported illnesses associated with this year’s domoic acid event.

Domoic acid accumulation in seafood is a natural occurrence that is related to a “bloom” of a particular single-celled plant. The conditions that support the growth of this plant are impossible to predict. CDPH routinely monitors phytoplankton levels in coastal waters and bi-valve shellfish, and will increase sampling of other species when monitoring indicates that an event may be occurring.

CDPH will continue to coordinate its efforts with the [California Department of Fish and Wildlife](#) (CDFW) and the fishing community to collect Dungeness crab samples from the northern California coast until the domoic acid levels have dissipated. Please consult CDFW for information about the recreational Dungeness crab season, which is scheduled to open November 5th.

To receive updated information about shellfish poisoning and quarantines, call CDPH’s toll-free Shellfish Information Line at (800) 553-4133. For additional information, visit CDPH’s [Natural Marine Toxins: PSP and Domoic Acid Web page](#) or CDPH’s [Domoic Acid Web page](#), which includes additional information and domoic acid testing results.