



# News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Dungeness Crab Health Advisory Lifted in Sonoma County**

SACRAMENTO - The health advisory regarding Dungeness crabs caught along the coast has been lifted from state waters in all areas south of the Sonoma/Mendocino County Line (Latitude 38° 46.1' N, near Gualala). California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Director and State Public Health Officer Dr. Karen Smith lifted this advisory today due to recent tests showing that traces of domoic acid have declined to low or undetectable levels in Dungeness crabs caught near Gualala and Bodega Bay.

This partial lifting comes after the [February 11, 2016 announcement](#) lifting the advisory for Dungeness crab caught south of Point Reyes (Latitude 38° 00' N).

**The advisory remains in effect for Dungeness crab in state waters north of the Sonoma/Mendocino County Line (Latitude 38° 46.1' N) and for rock crabs in state waters around Santa Cruz, Santa Rosa, the San Miguel Islands and areas north of Latitude 35° 40' N (near Piedras Blancas Light Station in San Luis Obispo County), due to continued elevated levels of domoic acid in crabs from those areas.**

CDPH and the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment concur that meat from Dungeness crabs caught along the coast south of the Sonoma/Mendocino County line is safe to consume. However, **consumers are advised to not eat the viscera (internal organs, also known as “butter” or “guts”) of crabs.** The viscera usually contain much higher levels of domoic acid than crab body meat. When whole crabs are cooked in liquid, domoic acid may 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:

- 1) Remove the crab viscera and rinse out the body cavity prior to cooking, or
- 2) 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. While the bloom that occurred earlier this year has dissipated, it takes a period of time for the organisms feeding on the phytoplankton to eliminate the domoic acid from their bodies.

CDPH will continue to coordinate its efforts with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the fishing community to collect crab samples from the central and northern California coast until the domoic acid has dissipated to safe levels.

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](#) and CDPH's [Domoic Acid health information Web page](#).

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