



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Rock Crab Health Advisory Lifted for Remainder of Channel Islands

SACRAMENTO – California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Director and State Public Health Officer Dr. Karen Smith has today completely lifted the health advisory for rock crabs caught off the coast of Santa Barbara County in state waters around the Santa Cruz, Santa Rosa and San Miguel islands (Channel Islands). This comes after recent tests showing traces of domoic acid have declined to low or undetectable levels in crabs caught near the islands.

Today's decision follows [the March 28, 2016 announcement](#) partially lifting the advisory from the Channel Islands while keeping an area between Santa Rosa Island and Santa Cruz Island under the advisory.

The advisory remains in effect for rock crabs caught in state waters north of Latitude 36° 58.72' N. (near Sand Hill Bluff, approximately 9 miles north of the Santa Cruz Harbor entrance).

CDPH and the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment concur that rock crabs caught in the areas around the Channel Islands are 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.** 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 last 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 rock crab samples from the central and northern California coast until the domoic acid levels have dissipated.

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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