



BC Centre for Disease Control
An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority

Notice to Restaurants and Retail Establishments Selling or Serving Oysters in BC

Update posted: March 3, 2017

We are continuing to receive reports of [norovirus illness](#) associated with the consumption of raw and lightly cooked oysters sourced from harvesting areas in BC. Norovirus causes vomiting and diarrhea. The investigation of these illnesses is ongoing and being conducted with other agencies. We have not identified the source of contamination for the oysters. Updated information about the investigation can be found on the Public Health Agency of Canada web-site at <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/phn-asp/2017/outbreak-norovirus-eclosion-eng.php>

Harvesting areas linked to illnesses are being assessed by regulating agencies and in some situations tested and closed. Four shellfish farms where oysters are harvested in BC have been closed for harvest at this time. Product from closed areas is no longer available on the market. Illnesses linked to raw/undercooked oysters continue to be reported, indicating contaminated product is on the market.

BC raw oysters continue to be available for purchase and sale/serving in restaurant and retail establishments in BC.

Please follow these recommendations to limit the risk of illness and to help with the investigation.

1. Inform customers about risk of consuming raw oysters so they can make an informed decision. Please refer customers to the menu warning and advise customers they can lower their risk of illness by consuming cooked oysters.
2. Inform customers what varieties of raw oysters you are selling or serving to them. This will help them remember what they ate.
3. Use the shellfish receiving log to record all incoming shipments of oysters and record the shellfish tag supplier and lot number. Store shellfish tags by date served and bundle with date label. This will help Environmental Health Officers retrieve the information needed in the event of an investigation.
4. When preparing cooked oysters, cook oysters to an internal temperature of 90°C (194°F) for a minimum of 90 seconds.
5. If you receive a report of illness associated with consumption of oysters from a customer, refer them to their local public health office (health authority).

Further guidelines for restaurants and retail about raw oysters are available on this site, including links to a food safety plan and shellfish receiving log:

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/food-your-health/fish-shellfish>