

Safe Shellfish Harvesting

Always check the [BC Centre for Disease Control shellfish harvesting map](#) for the latest closures on the day you go to harvest shellfish.

Shellfish can pick up harmful bacteria, viruses, and toxins found in ocean. Eating contaminated shellfish can lead to serious illnesses that can be life-threatening such as:

- paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP),
- diarrhetic shellfish poisoning (DSP) and
- amnesic shellfish poisoning (ASP).

Paralysis caused by shellfish toxins can be deadly.

Cooking contaminated shellfish that cause these illnesses does not make them safe to eat.

Symptoms

Symptoms can start minutes to hours after eating contaminated shellfish.

If you feel tingling or numbness that spreads past your lips and mouth, increasing weakness, or difficulty walking or swallowing after eating shellfish, go to your nearest emergency department or call 9-1-1.

If you get diarrhea, vomiting and stomach cramping after eating shellfish, call:

- Drug and Poison Information Centre at 1-800-567-8911,
- HealthLink BC at 8-1-1, or
- a health care provider.

Prevent illness when harvesting shellfish

- Always check if a shellfish area is open on the day you go harvesting. Visit the BCCDC [Shellfish Harvesting Status Map](#) to find open and closed sites.
- Harvest when the tide is going out (receding).
- Put your harvested shellfish into a chilled cooler and keep them cold.

Prepare shellfish safely

- Only eat cooked shellfish. Cooking destroys most viruses and bacteria and decreases the risk of gastrointestinal illness. Cook shellfish to an internal temperature of 90°C for at least 90 seconds.
- Always split crabs and remove gut contents before boiling.
- Keep cooking areas clean. Separate raw and cooked seafood to prevent cross-contamination. Clean and sanitize knives and cutting boards.
- Wash your hands before and after preparing food.

Affected Seafood:

- Mussels
- Clams
- Oysters
- Scallops
- Some crabs
- Cockles
- Whelks
- Prawns
- Squid
- Other species that feed on plankton