



“Protecting the health of all Californians”

# Public Health Week

APRIL 8, 2016

## Food Safety in California

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in six, or 48 million Americans contract a foodborne illness each year. Of those that become sick, nearly 128,000 people will be hospitalized and 3,000 will die as a result of their illness. There are some easy and effective steps you can take to help lessen your chance of contracting a foodborne illness – please see the quick link for “Safe Food Handling Practices.”

Within the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), is the Food, Drug, and Radiation Safety Division of the Center for Environmental Health. The Food and Drug Branch’s mission is to protect and improve the health of all California residents by assuring that foods, drugs, medical devices and certain other consumer products are safe and are not adulterated, misbranded nor falsely advertised; and that drugs and medical devices are effective.

## Domoic Acid

Domoic acid is a naturally occurring toxin that is related to a “bloom” of a particular single-celled diatom called *Pseudo-nitzschia*. CDPH coordinate s with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the fishing community to test for domoic acid. The conditions that support the growth of *Pseudo-nitzschia* are impossible to predict. Crustaceans, fish and shellfish are capable of accumulating elevated levels of domoic acid without apparent ill effects on the animals. Elevated levels of domoic acid in crustaceans, fish and shellfish pose a significant risk to the public if they are consumed. Domoic acid can be fatal to people if consumed in high doses. 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.

The Domoic Acid Advisory remains in effect for rock crab in areas north of San Luis Obispo County and for Dungeness crab in state waters north of the Sonoma/Mendocino County due to continued elevated levels of domoic acid in crabs from those areas. 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, please see the quick link on the right.

This is a periodic update for the Legislature on CDPH issues. For more information please email the Department at [Office of Legislation](#) or call (916) 440-7502.

## Food Safety Quick Links

[Food Safety Program](http://cdph.ca.gov/programs/Pages/FDB%20Food%20Safety%20Program.aspx)  
([cdph.ca.gov/programs/Pages/FDB%20Food%20Safety%20Program.aspx](http://cdph.ca.gov/programs/Pages/FDB%20Food%20Safety%20Program.aspx))

[California Food Recalls](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/Pages/fdbFr.aspx)  
(<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/Pages/fdbFr.aspx>)

[California Retail Food Code](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/services/Documents/fdbRFC.pdf)  
(<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/services/Documents/fdbRFC.pdf>)

[Sherman Food, Drug and Cosmetic Law](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/services/Documents/fdbSFDC_A.pdf)  
([http://www.cdph.ca.gov/services/Documents/fdbSFDC\\_A.pdf](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/services/Documents/fdbSFDC_A.pdf))

[Safe Food Handling Practices](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/services/Documents/fdbRlgde58.pdf)  
(<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/services/Documents/fdbRlgde58.pdf>)

[Domoic Acid](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/Pages/fdbDomoicAcidInfo.aspx)  
(<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/Pages/fdbDomoicAcidInfo.aspx>)

[Food, Drug and Radiation Safety Division](http://cdph.ca.gov/programs/Pages/FoodDrugandRadiationSafetyDivision.aspx)  
([cdph.ca.gov/programs/Pages/FoodDrugandRadiationSafetyDivision.aspx](http://cdph.ca.gov/programs/Pages/FoodDrugandRadiationSafetyDivision.aspx))

The Food Safety Program of the Food and Drug Branch strives to be a world leader and trusted voice in farm to table food safety. The mission of the program is to protect and improve the health of consumers by assuring foods are safe, and are not adulterated, misbranded, or falsely advertised. The program accomplishes this through sound investigations and enforcement based on scientific principles and specific legal authority.

The program provides efficient, fair, and continually improving quality service through enforcement, communication, education, and cooperation.

Within the Food and Drug Laboratory Branch is the Chemistry Section and the Microbiology Section.

The Chemistry Section analyzes food, drugs, medical devices and consumer products for chemical adulterations preservatives.

Common analytes in foods are

heavy metals, other toxic chemicals, carcinogens, toxins, food additives and preservatives. Products typically analyzed include: processed foods, herbal products, seafood, and raw agricultural commodities.

The Microbiology Section analyzes food, drugs, cosmetics, and environmental samples for microbial contamination. Generic tests for microbial load, sterility, or contamination are available. In addition, tests for specific agents, such as *E. coli* O157:H7, *Salmonella*, *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*, *Vibrio vulnificus*, and *Listeria monocytogenes* can be conducted. Rapid testing for protein biotoxins that cause food poisoning, such as the botulism toxins, staphylococcal enterotoxins and ricin, is also available.

The products typically analyzed include: food, environmental samples, and raw agricultural commodities.