



Port Susan Shellfish Harvest Closure, Oct. 19, 2017

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Elevated levels of toxin discovered

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SNOHOMISH COUNTY, Wash. – The Washington State Department of Health has notified the Snohomish Health District that the Port Susan area is closed to all species of recreational shellfish harvesting due to elevated levels of paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) toxin.

Additional shellfish harvesting closures in Snohomish County include Picnic Point south to the King County line and South Skagit Bay.

All species means clams (including geoduck), oysters, mussels, and other invertebrates such as the moon snail; areas are also closed for the sport harvest of scallops. Closures do not apply to shrimp and, while crabmeat is not known to contain the PSP toxin, the guts can contain unsafe levels. To be safe, clean crab thoroughly and discard the guts (butter).

Paralytic shellfish poison is produced by some species of microscopic algae. The biotoxin affects the nervous system and paralyzes muscles. High levels can cause severe illness and death, which in some cases can occur in less than 30 minutes.

Symptoms of PSP can include early symptoms of tingling of the lips and tongue and may begin less than two hours after eating toxic shellfish. Later symptoms include:

- Tingling in fingers and toes
- Loss of control of arms and legs
- Difficulty breathing
- Nausea
- Sense of floating

If a person consumes enough toxin, muscles of the chest and abdomen become paralyzed—including muscles used for breathing—and the person can suffocate.

If you think you have PSP and the symptoms are mild, contact your health care provider. If symptoms are severe, call 911 or have someone take you to the emergency room immediately.

Residents are encouraged to protect themselves from PSP. Before harvesting any kind of shellfish, check the shellfish safety map at www.doh.wa.gov/shellfishsafety.htm, or call the Marine Biotoxin Hotline at 1-800-562-5632 for up to date information.

The Snohomish Health District works for a safer and healthier community through disease prevention, health promotion, and protection from environmental threats. To read more about the District and for important health information, visit www.snohd.org.

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