



Shellfish Poisoning

Definition: Shellfish poisoning is caused by marine toxins which can contaminate certain seafood. The seafood contaminated with these naturally occurring chemicals frequently looks, smells, and tastes normal. When humans eat such seafood, disease can result.

Signs and Symptoms: Symptoms may include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, numbness and tingling in the face, mouth and hands; in extreme cases more severe neurological signs such as memory loss or respiratory depression can occur.

Transmission: Illness occurs when an individual eats contaminated shellfish.

Diagnosis: Diagnosis is made by clinical symptoms and can be confirmed with positive testing of the shellfish. There is no commercial test available for humans.

Role of the School Nurse:

- **Prevention:**
 - Do not eat finfish or shellfish sold as bait. Bait products do not need to meet the same food safety regulations as seafood for human consumption.
 - Do not harvest shellfish from floating containers or harvested from open ocean.
 - Consume shellfish from certified dealers only.
 - Avoid consuming lobster or crab tomalley.
 - **Cooking shellfish does not kill the toxin.**
- **Treatment:** There is no specific treatment. Supportive care should be given as needed. If someone becomes very ill, s/he should seek medical attention.
- **Exclusions:** Students or staff with vomiting/diarrhea should be excluded until asymptomatic.
- **Referral:** Student with clinically compatible illness should be referred to primary care provider.

Reporting Requirements: Shellfish poisoning must be reported immediately at first suspicion of the disease. Report cases to ME CDC at 1-800-821-5821.

Resources:

- Federal CDC link: http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/marinetoxins_g.htm
- Maine CDC link: <http://www.maine.gov/dmr/index.htm>