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DPH ISSUES CONSUMER ADVISORY FOR LOBSTER TOMALLEY

Lobster meat is safe to eat

BOSTON - The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) is reminding consumers not to eat lobster tomalley, the soft green substance found in the body cavity of lobsters, because this part of the lobster can build up high levels of toxins and other pollutants.

In past years DPH has warned consumers against eating lobster tomalley because it can accumulate high levels of toxins such as PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyl compounds). Recent reports from the [Maine Department of Marine Resources](#) also indicate the presence of high levels of paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) toxin in some tomalley from lobsters in that state.

Lobster meat is safe to eat: it is only the lobster tomalley that consumers should not eat.

This year scientists are predicting an abundance of the plankton that is responsible for producing the toxin that causes paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP), which can be fatal. There have been no cases of PSP in Massachusetts since the early 1990's.

What is Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning?

Symptoms of PSP include tingling and/or numbness of the mouth, face, or neck; muscle weakness, headaches, and nausea. Symptoms usually occur within two hours of eating contaminated seafood. In extreme cases, symptoms can lead to respiratory failure – so consumers are advised to seek immediate medical attention if any of these symptoms occur. Reports of illness should be reported to the local board of health or the DPH Food Protection Program at 617-983-6773.

Information for consumers

Lobster meat, crabs, shrimp and most fish do not normally accumulate toxin and are safe to eat.

Consumers should buy their seafood from approved sources that are government-inspected such as licensed seafood dealers, distributors and retail food establishments.

Consumers harvesting shellfish or lobsters for personal use should make sure that the shellfish beds are not closed to harvesting. For information about areas closed to harvesting, please visit www.mass.gov/dfwele/dmf.