

## Saxitoxin Poisoning (Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning)

Merlin reporting code = 98840  
Case report form (CRF): N/A  
**NO CRF REQUIRED**

### Clinical description

A person with circumoral paresthesia; numbness or tingling of the face, arms, and legs; ataxia; respiratory distress; headache; dizziness; weakness; nausea; or vomiting. Onset is 15 minutes to 10 hours following the consumption of puffer fish. Illness can also be linked to consumption of molluscan shellfish from non-Florida waters such as from northern Pacific and other cold water sources (not known to be present in molluscan shellfish in Florida at this time). In severe cases, muscle paralysis and respiratory failure occur, with death occurring in 2 to 25 hours. Cases associated with Florida puffer fish consumption experience milder symptoms and fewer hospitalizations.

### Laboratory criteria for case classification

Toxin detection in urine or food sample.

### Case classification

#### Confirmed:

A clinically compatible illness in a person with laboratory evidence.

#### Probable:

- A clinically compatible illness in a person with a history of exposure to puffer fish or non-Florida molluscan shellfish
- OR
- A clinically compatible illness in a person who is epidemiologically linked to a confirmed case.

#### Suspect:

A clinically compatible illness in a person whose history of exposure to puffer fish or non-Florida molluscan shellfish is unknown.

### Comments

Contact your [Regional Environmental Epidemiologist](#) for information.

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