

red tide?

dodge it!

Don't wade, swim or swallow water where there is red tide.

With so many places in Florida to explore, we sometimes forget our beaches, lakes and rivers are natural places that change with the seasons. Enjoy Florida's wild and not-so-wild areas, and know when to swim it, shore it or dodge it.

In Florida, red tide is caused by a naturally occurring microscopic alga (a plant-like microorganism) called *Karenia brevis* or *K. brevis*

K. brevis produces a toxin that can affect the central nervous systems of fish, birds, mammals and other animals. Large concentrations, called blooms, can change the water color to red, light or dark green, or brown.

Red tides occur all over the world

No single factor causes a red tide. *K. brevis* is found almost exclusively in the Gulf of Mexico but has been found on the east coast of Florida and off the coast of North Carolina.

Red tide blooms can last days, weeks or months

Blooms can change daily due to wind conditions and water currents. Onshore winds normally bring it near the shore and offshore winds drive it out to sea.

Report fish kills or illnesses

Fish Kill Hotline: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, **1-800-636-0511**

Human illnesses: Florida Poison Control Center, **1-800-222-1222**

9,000+ miles of SALTY & FRESH Florida shoreline Know when to:

swim it

With a buddy.
When safety flags
& signs say
thumbs-up!

shore it

If you have a cut
on your skin,
your immune system
is weak, or
you don't have
a buddy with you.

dodge it

Stay clear of living
things near the shoreline
& in the water like
mosquitoes &
algae blooms.

Avoid blooms and dead fish. Some people who swim in red tide experience skin irritation and eye irritation. After contact, thoroughly wash off with fresh water. Red tide can also produce airborne chemicals, called toxins, that can cause you to cough, sneeze and tear. For most people, these are temporary symptoms. Wearing a particle mask and using antihistamines can help with symptoms. If you have a chronic respiratory problem like severe asthma, be careful near red tide areas, and check current marine conditions.

Do not swim in areas where there are dead fish in the water including when a red tide is present.

Commercial seafood. Commercial seafood purchased in restaurants, grocery stores and seafood markets is safe to eat.

Seafood harvested from areas with a red tide:

- Clams and oysters (mollusks) can contain red tide toxins that cause Neurotoxic Shellfish Poisoning. Check local harvesting status before collecting at FreshFromFlorida.com.
- Finfish caught live and healthy can be eaten if filleted and rinsed thoroughly.
- Edible meat of crabs, shrimp and lobsters (shellfish) can be eaten (do not eat the tamalley—the green digestive gland—of shellfish).
- Do not eat distressed or animals found dead under any circumstances.

For current red tide conditions, visit:
MyFWC.com/REDTIDESTATUS, or VisitBeaches.org or call
941-BEACHES (232-2437).