



Merlin disease code: 98840 Saxitoxin
Poisoning (Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning)

No paper case report form
No Merlin extended data

Clinical criteria for case classification

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.

Epidemiological criteria for case classification

Either of the following:

- A person who is epidemiologically linked to a confirmed saxitoxin poisoning case
- **Or** a person with a history of exposure to puffer fish or non-Florida molluscan shellfish.

Case classification

Confirmed:

A clinically compatible illness in a person with laboratory criteria.

Probable:

A clinically compatible illness in a person with epidemiological criteria.

Suspect:

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

Criteria to distinguish a new case from previous reports

Not applicable.

Comments

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