

**Mission:**

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS**  
State Surgeon General & Secretary

**Vision:** To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 14, 2013

**Contact:** Office of Communications

(850) 245-4111

**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH REMINDS RESIDENTS OF RED TIDE PRECAUTIONS**

*~DOH alerts communities to potential risk at beaches~*

**TALLAHASSEE** - The Florida Department of Health is reminding people to use caution at the beach or in waters with high concentrations of red tide algae. Adverse health effects on humans and pets can be prevented by staying away from affected areas until the wind moves the algae further offshore.

In Lee and Sarasota counties, the Florida Department of Health monitors beaches for signs of red tide, which has been known to kill fish, discolor water and cause minor respiratory irritation on some local beaches.

As a precaution, health officials recommend the following:

- Wear shoes when walking on the sand. This will help prevent puncture wounds from the spines or bones of dead fish.
- Most people can swim in red tide, but it can cause skin irritation and burning eyes. If your skin is easily irritated, avoid red tide water. If you do swim, thoroughly wash off with fresh water when you get out. Do not swim near dead fish.
- Symptoms from breathing red tide toxins usually include coughing, sneezing and teary eyes. For most people, symptoms are temporary when red tide toxins are in the air. However, wearing a particle filter mask may lessen the effects, and over-the-counter antihistamines may decrease symptoms. Check the marine forecast. Fewer toxins are in the air when the wind is blowing offshore.
- People with chronic respiratory problems like asthma should avoid red tide areas. People with symptoms that persist should seek medical attention.
- Residents living in beach areas affected by red tide should close windows and run the air conditioner (making sure that the filter is maintained according to manufacturer's specifications).
- Recreational fishermen:
  - Do not eat mollusks (clams or oysters) taken from red tide waters, as they contain toxins that cause a food poisoning
  - Finfish caught live can be eaten if filleted.
  - Use common sense: harvesting distressed or dead animals is not advised under any circumstances. Edible parts of other animals (crustaceans such as crabs, shrimp and lobsters) are not affected by red tide and can be eaten.
- Pet owners: red tide poses a risk to animals brought to the beach and can affect those that ingest the algae. Be sure to rinse animals off with freshwater if they swim in red tide waters.

Please note, commercial seafood found in restaurants and grocery stores is safe to eat because it comes from red tide-free water and is closely monitored.

Beachgoers are encouraged to check the Mote Marine Laboratory Beach Conditions Report before going to the beach, as conditions can change daily. The report is updated twice a day and can be

**Florida Department of Health**

Office of Communications  
4052 Bald Cypress Way Bin A04 • Tallahassee, FL 32399  
PHONE: 850-245/4111 • FAX 850/488-6495

**www.FloridasHealth.com**

TWITTER: HealthyFLA  
FACEBOOK: FLDepartmentofHealth  
YOUTUBE: fldoh

accessed online at [www.mote.org/beaches](http://www.mote.org/beaches) (also available on mobile devices). Visitors can also register to receive email reports about specific beaches. For telephone updates, call 941-BEACHES (232-2437).

For the latest red tide status reports and general information about red tide, visit the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) website at [MyFWC.com/Research](http://MyFWC.com/Research). The FWC-Mote Cooperative Facebook page is [www.facebook.com/FLHABs](http://www.facebook.com/FLHABs).

DOH protects, promotes and improves the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

###