RED TIDE

TOP 10 RED TIDE FACTS:

1. In Florida, red tide is caused by a naturally occurring microscopic alga (a plant-like microorganism) called *Karenia brevis* or *K. brevis*.
2. The organism produces a toxin that can affect the central nervous systems of fish, birds, mammals, and other animals.
3. At high concentrations (called blooms), the organism may discolor the water — sometimes red, light or dark green, or brown.
4. Red tides or harmful algal blooms (HABs) occur worldwide. *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.
5. Red tide blooms can last days, weeks, or months and can also 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.
6. Red tide was first officially recorded in Florida in 1844.
7. A red tide bloom needs biology (the organisms), chemistry (natural or man-made nutrients for growth), and physics (concentrating and transport mechanisms). No single factor causes it. Tests are being conducted to see if coastal nutrients enhance or prolong blooms.
8. Red tide can irritate the skin and breathing of some people. (*See more about health effects on reverse.*)
9. Seafood from restaurants and hotels is monitored and is safe to eat. (*See reverse.*)
10. Mote Marine Laboratory publishes updated information on beach conditions, including red tide, twice daily. Visit *www.mote.org/beaches*.

If you have a question or a health problem related to red tide, please call the Florida Poison Control Information Center at:

1-800-222-1222

Health Info: *www.floridahealth.gov*
Report Fish Kills: 1-800-636-0511 [FWC]
Red Tide Info & Status Reports: *www.myfwc.com/redtide*
Red Tide Facts: *www.start1.org*
Current Beach Conditions: *www.mote.org/beaches*
or call 941-BEACHES (232-2437)

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HEALTH TIPS:

1. 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 experience irritation, get out and thoroughly wash off with fresh water. Swimming near dead fish is not recommended.

2. 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. Wearing a particle filter mask may lessen the effects, and research shows that using over-the-counter antihistamines may decrease your symptoms. Check the marine forecast. Fewer toxins are in the air when the wind is blowing offshore.

3. People with chronic respiratory problems like asthma and COPD should avoid red tide areas. If you have symptoms that persist, seek medical attention.

SEAFOOD SAFETY TIPS:

1. Commercial seafood found in restaurants and grocery stores is safe because it comes from red tide-free water and is monitored by the government.

2. Recreational fishermen must be careful:
   - Do not eat mollusks (clams or oysters) taken from red tide waters, as they contain toxins that cause a food poisoning called NSP (Neurotoxic Shellfish Poisoning).
   - Finfish caught live and healthy can be eaten if filleted.
   - Edible parts of other animals commonly called shellfish (crabs, shrimp, and lobsters) are not affected by red tide and can be eaten. Do not eat the tamale (green stuff / hepatopancreas).
   - Use common sense: harvesting distressed or dead animals is not advised under any circumstances.

MOTE MARINE LABORATORY & AQUARIUM

START Solutions To Avoid Red Tide, Inc.

Florida HEALTH