



RED TIDE

TOP 10 RED TIDE FACTS:

1. In Florida, red tide is caused by a microscopic alga (a plant-like microorganism) called *Karenia brevis* or *K. brevis*.
2. The organism produces a toxin that can affect the central nervous system 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, brown or clear.
4. Red tides or Harmful Algal Blooms 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. 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), physics (concentrating and transport mechanisms). No one factor causes it. Tests are being conducted to see if coastal nutrients enhance or prolong blooms.
8. Report fish kills to FWRI at 1-800-636-0511. Check current red tide status information by county at www.floridamarine.org.
9. To learn more about Red Tide go to www.RedTideOnline.com or view four streaming videos online at www.Start1.com
10. Red Tide Health Hotline is a FREE, 24/7 service staffed by medical professionals.

Call **1-888-232-8635** for health questions.

For more information check these helpful red tide sites:
www.RedTideOnline.com • www.MyFWC.com
www.MOTE.org • www.START1.com
www.DOH.state.fl.us • www.CDC.gov



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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 are normally coughing, sneezing and teary eyes. Symptoms are usually 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 respiratory problems should avoid red tide areas, especially when winds are blowing toxins near shore. If you go to the beach, take your short acting inhaler with you. If you have symptoms, leave the beach and seek air conditioning.

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 fisherman must be careful:
 - Do not eat mollusks (clams or oysters) taken from Florida red tide waters, as they contain toxins that cause a food poisoning called NSP (Neurotoxic Shellfish Poisoning).
 - Finfish caught live can be eaten if filleted.
 - Shrimp and crabs are safe to eat.
 - Use common sense: Harvesting distressed or dead animals is not advised under any circumstances. Edible parts of other animals (like crustaceans) commonly called shellfish (crabs, shrimp and lobsters), are not affected by the red tide organisms and can be eaten.

CALL THE RED TIDE HEALTH HOTLINE
FOR QUESTIONS AND/OR ADVICE:

24/7 FREE service staffed by medical professionals.
1-888-232-8635



RedTideOnline.com is provided as a service to Florida businesses, citizens and visitors by The Red Tide Alliance of the FWC-Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI), Mote Marine Laboratory and Solutions to Avoid Red Tide (START) in cooperation with the Florida Department of Health.