



Shellfish Safety Tips



Bivalve shellfish such as oysters, clams, scallops, mussels, and cockles feed on microscopic plankton in the water. Changes in water quality can cause bacteria, biotoxins, or viruses to build up in the shellfish tissue and make those who eat it sick.

Contaminated shellfish do not necessarily smell, taste or look different from uncontaminated shellfish.

Storing, Handling and Cooking Shellfish

Shellfish Storing Times

Refrigerate shellfish immediately after purchase and during transport

Never refreeze thawed shellfish



Freezer -18°C (0°F) or colder
Shucked (out of shell) 3-4 months
Don't freeze live mussels, clams and oysters

Refrigerator 0-4°C (32-40°F)
Shucked (out of shell) 1-2 days
Live mussels and clams 2-3 days
Live oysters 7-10 days

Handling Shellfish

- Live shellfish are in an open container covered with a damp towel
- Shucked shellfish (out of shell) are in a tightly closed container
- Raw shellfish and its juices do not touch other foods



- Do not keep oysters at room temperature longer than 60 minutes
- Going on a picnic? Keep shellfish in a cooler



- Thaw shellfish in the refrigerator and use within 12 hours
- Thaw shellfish by immersing in cold water for about an hour in a leak-proof plastic bag
- If you cook shellfish immediately, microwave it on "defrost" setting until the shellfish package is softened, but still icy



- Cooked shellfish should be eaten within 3 days
- Alcohol and hot sauce do not kill harmful bacteria

Cooking Shellfish

- Scrub shells with a stiff brush under drinking water before cooking
- Thoroughly cook shellfish to reduce the chances of foodborne illness
- Throw away any shellfish that do not open once cooked

Fry

minimum 3 minutes at 190°C (375°F)

Boil

in boiling water 3 to 5 minutes more after shells open

Steam

in a single layer 4 to 9 minutes



If you feel sick, call your doctor!



More information

Learn more about shellfish safety at <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/shellfish-mollusques/index-eng.htm>