

NEWS RELEASE
August 23, 2005

MASON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
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TO: KMAS, KRXY, SHELTON-MASON COUNTY JOURNAL, THE OLYMPIAN, SHELTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, NORTH MASON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, CITY OF SHELTON, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, THE SUN

RE: Cook Shellfish Thoroughly

Late each summer we hear about beaches all around Puget Sound being closed to shellfish harvest because of Vibrio. Vibriosis is an intestinal disease caused by small bacteria called Vibrio, which are found in fish and shellfish. Vibrio occurs naturally in marine coastal waters. Because the bacteria are more common in warmer months, fish and shellfish are more likely to be contaminated in the summer.

Most cases occur from eating raw or undercooked fish or shellfish. Failure to keep shellfish cold after harvesting can contribute to the growth of the bacteria. Poor food handling during preparation or improper refrigeration of seafood can also lead to illness.

Symptoms of Vibrio include diarrhea, abdominal cramps, nausea, vomiting, headache, fever, and chills. The illness is usually mild or moderate and runs its course in 2-3 days. In severe cases, hospitalization may be required. Anyone who eats raw or partially cooked fish or shellfish runs the risk of contracting Vibrio. Because the bacteria multiply when it is warm, infection is more likely during the warmer months of the year.

Eat only well cooked shellfish, especially in summer months. Do not rinse cooked food with seawater. Keep shellfish cold after harvesting.

The Mason County Department of Health Services and the State Department of Health advise that all shellfish recreationally harvested during the months of May-October from all of Hood Canal, including Annas Bay, be cooked thoroughly.

For more information, call the Mason County Department of Health Services at (360) 427-9670 ext. 580 or visit the State Department of Health website at www.doh.wa.gov.

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