



Health Warning - Swan and Canning Rivers *Alexandrium* algal bloom and Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning – 6/3/20

An *Alexandrium* algal bloom is currently impacting the Swan and Canning Rivers. This alga can produce a neuro-toxin that is then concentrated by filter-feeding shellfish. This toxin accumulates in the internal organs and potentially in the muscle tissue of shellfish, crabs and some fish species.

Consumption of shellfish, crabs and potentially fish containing high levels of this toxin can result in paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP). Cooking does not destroy these toxins. Shellfish includes oysters, mussels, clams, pipis, scallops, cockles and razor clams.

What is the current health warning and the affected area?

The current health warning is to **not eat fish, crabs or shellfish** collected from the following areas within the Swan and Canning Rivers:

- **Swan River – from Pelican Point, Crawley to the South of Perth Yacht Club, Applecross and upstream to Middle Swan (Reid Highway) Bridge, Middle Swan.**
This includes the commonly known areas of Como Jetty, Matilda Bay, Perth Water, Elizabeth Quay, Barrack Street Jetty, Claisebrook Cove, Maylands Yacht Club, Ascot Waters, Hind Reserve, Riverside Gardens, Garvey Park, Sandy Beach Reserve, Point Reserve, Kings Meadow, Fish Market Reserve and Woodbridge Riverside Park.
- **Canning River – from the South of Perth Yacht Club and upstream to Kent Street Weir**
This includes commonly known areas of Canning Bridge, Mt Henry Bridge, Salter Point, Shelley Bridge, Riverton Bridge, and Castledare.

For the full current health warning refer to the Department of Health website: health.wa.gov.au.

Symptoms and effects of Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP)

Symptoms of PSP can begin within minutes or up to 24 hours after consumption and include:

- tingling and numbness around the mouth which can spread to the face, neck, arms and legs.
- nausea and vomiting
- headache
- weakness
- blurred vision or temporary blindness
- prickly sensation at the finger tips
- change in temperature sensation
- loss of balance
- difficulty speaking or swallowing
- in severe cases difficulty breathing, paralysis and death can occur.

Note: Seek urgent medical attention, particularly if you have any difficulty breathing.

Where are health warning signs displayed?

Health warning signs (see below) have been erected at popular fishing spots, jetties and boat ramps within the affected area. Even if a sign is not erected at the place you fish, if it is within the affected area, you are still advised not to eat any fish, crabs or shellfish caught or collected.



Where can I fish in the Swan and Canning Rivers?

It is recommended that any fishing or crabbing for consumption is undertaken outside of the current warning area. However, it is still okay to fish (**catch and release only**) within the warning area. Please check the Department of Health website: health.wa.gov.au for current health warnings before you go fishing in the Swan or Canning Rivers.

Can I safely consume crabs and fish taken outside of the affected area?

At this time, it is considered unlikely that consuming crabs or fish caught outside of the affected area poses a significant risk of exposure to harmful levels of toxins. However, as a precaution, it is recommended not to consume the internal organs of the crab, removing from the crab prior to cooking. Should you feel unwell or experience symptoms of PSP, seek urgent medical attention.

Is it safe for me to swim in and recreate on the Swan or Canning Rivers?

Yes. Swimming, water-skiing and boating is safe, but as a general rule swimming should be avoided in areas of discoloured water. There are some areas associated with this bloom, where a yellow to red discoloration or plume of the water may be observed. These areas should be avoided by people and their pets.

Algal monitoring and toxin testing required to determine the all-clear

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) undertakes weekly phytoplankton (microalgae) monitoring in the Swan and Canning Rivers. For current monitoring information refer to the DBCA website <https://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/science/riverpark-monitoring>. Toxin testing of mussels, crabs and fish species has also been undertaken, and further testing will determine when Department of Health can issue an all-clear and remove the current health warning.

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