

EMAIL NOTICE re: Ciguatera Fish Poisoning

Subject line: Notice to restaurants, caterers and grocery stores regarding the most recent outbreak of Ciguatera Fish Poisoning (CFP) in Bermuda and the types of fish involved.

Good afternoon,

Between 29th June and 17th July 2018, 13 people were diagnosed with ciguatera fish poisoning. The fish implicated in this outbreak were large Amberjacks and Barracuda. However, it should be noted that large Yellow jacks and Cubera snappers have been implicated in past cases of CFP in Bermuda.

Yellow jack and Amberjack may both be mistaken for the Almaco jack, which is locally called 'Bonita'. Almaco jack / Bonita has not been implicated in any CFP cases in Bermuda.

The following is information about Ciguatera Fish Poisoning. Please ensure that your staff are aware of this information and keep the flyer handy for reference.

What is Ciguatera Fish Poisoning?

- Ciguatera Fish Poisoning (CFP) is caused by toxins produced by microscopic marine plants that occur in tropical and subtropical waters. These toxins can enter the food chain and build up in large predatory fishes.
- The fish themselves are not affected, but when a tainted fish is eaten by a person, the toxins affect nerve function.
- The presence of CFP toxins is not related to how the fish is handled.

What are the symptoms?

- Common symptoms of CFP include itching, tingling, nerve pain, and the reversal of heat and cold sensations. This last symptom is a telltale sign of CFP because it is absent in other types of fish-related food poisoning. Vomiting and diarrhoea may be severe, moderate or absent. Additional symptoms include nausea, vertigo, joint and muscle pain, weakness, and numbness or burning in the mouth.
- Symptoms may begin as little as one hour after consuming toxic fish and can persist for an extended period of time. CFP is unpleasant, but most people that are affected recover fully over time.

Which fish can carry ciguatera?

- Whether or not an individual fish contains CFP toxins depends on the type and quantity of food that fish has eaten, as well as the prevalence of toxin-producing plants in the area where it has been feeding, so it is difficult to predict CFP risk.
- An older or larger predatory fish that has eaten many herbivorous fishes over a period of time has a greater risk of carrying CFP toxins than a younger or smaller fish of the same species.
- As already stated above the fish identified in the recent outbreak were large amberjacks, large yellow jacks and barracuda.

What should food service providers do to protect their customers and their businesses?

- Remember that CFP toxins do not change the appearance, taste or smell of a fish, and are not affected by handling practices, cooking or freezing. There is no simple detection test.

- Only buy fish from licensed commercial fishermen or licensed wholesale companies, and be certain of the type of fish you are buying.
- Make sure that all staff is familiar with the symptoms of CFP. As the symptoms of CFP can start within an hour of eating tainted fish, this may happen on site at some restaurants.
- If any of your customers report experiencing ciguatera symptoms, advise them to seek medical attention. Identify any and all fish that the customer has eaten recently and make sure that any remaining product from that fish is set aside and labelled as potentially ciguatoxic so that it will not be sold to anyone else. This includes soups, etc. Save and freeze a sample of any suspect fish, whether fresh or cooked, for testing.
- The Health Department's Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit should be notified as soon as possible, either by calling 332-8932 or emailing jdwilson@gov.bm. Prompt reporting of CFP makes it easier to track down the source and can help prevent further cases.

Best regards,



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