



SAXITOXIN

I. Protocol Overview

Saxitoxin is a potent biological toxin that is a product of certain species of dinoflagellates. Ingestion of contaminated shellfish can result in paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) syndrome. Exposure may cause numbness of the oral mucosa within 30 minutes after ingestion. Signs and symptoms typically progress rapidly in severe poisoning, including parasthesias, a floating sensation, muscle weakness, vertigo, and cranial nerve dysfunction. Respiratory failure and death may occur from paralysis within 2-12 hours in untreated cases. Timely medical assistance, in the form of mechanical artificial respiration is essential. There is no cure, but most human intoxications are non-lethal.

For all suspected chemical exposures, consult the Poison Control Center (800-222-1222) located at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Information and treatment advice is available to the public and healthcare professionals at no charge.

Saxitoxin can be detected in environmental samples in commercial laboratories and by an enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) method in biologic samples. Urinary saxitoxin can be assessed by liquid chromatograph tandem mass spectrometry (LC/MS/MS) techniques. Samples are extracted and pre-concentrated and then quantified using mass spectrometry analysis.

The Delaware Public Health Laboratory does not perform this testing. Contact the CDC or the Poison Control Center.

II. Contact Information

24/7 CDC Emergency Contact Number: 1-888-295-5156

Poison Control Center: 215-386-2100

III. CDC Website

<http://emergency.cdc.gov/agent/saxitoxin/casedef.asp>