

WHAT IS CIGUATERA?

Ciguatera is a disease caused by the consumption of fish that is contaminated with ciguatoxin. This toxin is produced by some types of algae and when fish feed on them or on other fish that have consumed them; they accumulate it in their organism. Over time, the amount of toxin in the fish increases and, as a result, the greater the size or weight of the fish, the more likely it is that it contains the toxin.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Symptoms appear between 6 and 24 hours after the consumption of fish:

Digestive: abdominal pain, nausea, vomit, diarrhoea

Neurological: tremors, tingling in the extremities. A characteristic symptom that may appear is **temperature inversion**: feeling cold when touching hot objects and vice versa.

Cardiovascular: perspiration, irregular pulse, hypotension, bradycardia.

Others: weakness, muscle pain, headache

If you experience these symptoms after consuming fish, see a physician and tell them what you have eaten.

WHERE IS CIGUATOXIN PREVALENT?

The highest incidence is in Australia, the Caribbean and the South Pacific. In Europe, cases have been detected in bodies of water in the Canary Islands and Madeira.



In our archipelago, nearly 100 patients have been diagnosed in the last few years. These diagnoses have been normally associated with recreational fishing, since, being for personal consumption; the fish has not undergone prior official inspection.

Certain large fish captured in the Canary Islands have to be subjected to the ciguatoxin detection analysis before being sold.

These fish, currently considered a risk when they exceed a certain weight, are: amberjack, island grouper, grouper, silverside, marlin, kingfish and swordfish. However, this does not mean that not all other species may contain the toxin.

WHAT CAN I DO AS PREVENTION?

- If you work in the fishing industry, learn about the species that most frequently cause ciguatera.
- Avoid eating large fish that have not been subjected to the ciguatoxin determination analysis.
- Avoid eating fish guts, eggs, skin and heads

BEAR IN MIND THAT:

The greater the size or weight of the fish, the higher the probability that it has ciguatoxin.

The toxin cannot be eliminated by heat so, even if you cook the fish, the toxin will remain inside it.

The toxin does not cause any type of alteration to the fish: the only way of knowing that a fish does not have ciguatoxin is through a laboratory analysis. Therefore, ***all suspicious species are analysed and only those that do not have ciguatoxin are sold***

SPECIES THAT HAVE CAUSED CIGUATERA IN THE CANARY ISLANDS OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS

Year	Species involved
2008	Amberjack
2009	Amberjack
2011	Amberjack
2012	Amberjack Grouper
2013	Grouper
2015	Island grouper Silverside
2016	Grouper Red porgy
2017	Island grouper Grouper

Ciguatera is a mandatory notifiable disease. In order to monitor it, the Directorate General of Public Health has the Epidemiological Surveillance System for ciguatera poisoning in the Canary Islands in place since the year 2009.

The Canary Islands actively participate in EuroCigua, an on-going project that was launched in 2016 and aims to determine the risk of ciguatera food poisoning in Europe.



For more information, please contact:

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CIGUATERA

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