



News Advisory

How to Keep your Family and Pets Safe as Harmful Algal Bloom Threat Increases during Summer Months

Pre-Holiday HAB Monitoring Assessments

August 30, 2023

With summer in full swing, Californians are getting outdoors and recreating in our beautiful waterways. But warmer temperatures create a ripe environment for algal blooms to flourish in our waterways. With the increased seasonal risk, the Water Boards perform pre-holiday freshwater harmful algal bloom (HAB) assessments at some of the highest recreational waterbodies across the state prior to major holidays, including Memorial Day, Fourth of July, and Labor Day.

The Water Boards-managed [HAB webmap](#) will be updated with the pre-holiday assessment information prior to the major holiday weekend. Please also be mindful of current waterbody recreational recommendations due to high flows this summer season.

The State Water Resources Control Board asks the public to be aware of freshwater HABs in lakes, reservoirs, rivers and streams, as they can cause illness and are especially harmful to children and pets. To learn how to stay safe, report a bloom, and track multiple blooms statewide, visit our [web portal](#).

Most harmful algal blooms are formed by cyanobacteria, small microbes that live in nearly every habitat on land and in the water. Increased water temperatures, slow moving water, and excessive nutrients cause cyanobacteria to rapidly multiply and form blooms that can produce toxins. They can be found near the surface of lakes and reservoirs. Harmful blooms can be a variety of colors -- green, white, red or brown -- and may look like thick paint floating or small flakes on the water.

Cyanobacteria can also grow as mats attached to rocks, sand, cobbles, bedrock or other plants attached to the bottom of a water body. Mats can detach and float to the surface of the water and strand along the shorelines.

We recommend that people practice healthy water habits while enjoying the outdoors this summer at your local lake, river or stream:

- Heed all instructions on posted advisories if present
- Avoid algae and scum in the water and on the shore
- Keep an eye on children and pets



- If you think a harmful algal bloom is present, do not let pets and other animals go into or drink the water or eat scum/algal accumulations on the shore
- Don't drink the water or use it for cooking
- Wash yourself, your family and your pets with clean water after water play
- If you catch fish, throw away guts and clean fillets with tap water or bottled water before cooking
- Avoid eating shellfish if you think a harmful algal bloom is present

Because cyanobacteria can produce toxins, they have the potential to harm the environment, people, pets, wildlife or livestock. Dogs and children are most likely to be affected because of their smaller body size, increased potential to swallow water while swimming, and tendency to stay in the water longer. [Recreational exposure](#) to cyanobacteria and associated toxins can cause eye irritation, skin rash, mouth ulcers, vomiting, diarrhea and cold and flu-like symptoms.

Dogs are especially susceptible because they tend to drink while in the water and lick their fur afterward, increasing their risk of exposure and illness. Symptoms with animals include vomiting or diarrhea, lethargy, abnormal liver function test results, difficulty breathing, foaming at the mouth, muscle twitching and sometimes death. The Office of Environmental Health and Hazard Assessment has a [fact sheet](#) to help inform dog owners.

Get medical treatment immediately if you think that you, your pet, or livestock has gotten sick after going in the water. Be sure to alert the medical professional to the possible contact with cyanobacteria. Also, make sure to contact the local county public health department. To report a bloom or a potentially related human or animal illness, do one of the following:

- Fill out the Bloom Report form on the portal
- Email: CyanoHAB.reports@waterboards.ca.gov
- Call the HABs hotline: 1-844-729-6466 (toll free)

Enjoy the summer months and beautiful waterways California has to offer. But remember, when in doubt, please keep out. For more information about HABs, please visit: [California Harmful Algal Blooms Portal](#).