

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT BLUE-GREEN ALGAE

Contra Costa Environmental Health
cchealth.org/algae/

California State Water Resources Control Board:
<http://www.mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs/what/index.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
cdc.gov/habs/environment.html

United States Environmental Protection Agency:
epa.gov/nutrientpollution/harmful-algal-blooms

IF CONCERNED ABOUT EXPOSURE CALL:
California Poison Center Help Hotline
1-800-222-1222



CONTRA COSTA
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
A Division of Contra Costa Health Services



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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT BLUE GREEN ALGAE



BLUE GREEN ALGAE POISONING CAN HARM OUR PETS & LOVED ONES...



BLUE GREEN ALGAE

Blue-green algae, also known as cyanobacteria, are simple organisms found naturally in water and wet environments. Blue-green algae prefer warm, stagnant, nutrient-rich water and are found most often in ponds, lakes and slow-moving rivers. A blue-green algal bloom is a buildup of algae that creates a green, blue-green, white or brown coloring on the surface of the water, sometimes occurring as mats or scum. They can occur at any time but are most common between June and September. Blue-green algal blooms are increasing in occurrence not only in California but nationwide as well. Some species of blue-green algae produce toxins, so skin contact and ingestion can be dangerous.

WHO'S AT RISK

Children, people with liver disease or kidney damage, those with weakened immune systems and pets are at higher risk of serious toxic effects from blue-green algae.

Children and toddlers tend to explore shorelines where blue-green algae deposit, causing greater opportunity for exposure. Based on body weight, children tend to swallow a higher volume of water than adults, and therefore could be at greater risk.

Pets and livestock are also at risk when they drink contaminated water or lick the algae from their fur.

SYMPTOMS

People who have been exposed to water containing toxic blue-green algae, either by direct body contact or by ingestion, can have a number of symptoms including the following:

- rashes
- eye, nose, mouth or throat irritation
- allergic reactions
- headache
- gastrointestinal upset including abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea
- malaise or general feeling of discomfort

Symptoms of dogs that have died from blue-green algae ingestion include vomiting, diarrhea, and seizures within minutes to hours of swimming. If you believe your pet has been exposed, consult your veterinarian

HOW TO AVOID TOXIC EXPOSURE

Follow these steps to protect yourself and those around you:

- Always assume that a blue-green algal bloom is toxic.
- Do not swim and avoid jet-skiing, wind surfing or water skiing in water with scum layers or blooms.
- Do not allow children or pets to swim in water with scum layers or blooms.
- Do not drink or use blue-green algae water. Boiling will not remove algal toxins.
- If you come into contact with a bloom, wash your skin and hair thoroughly. If wearing a swimsuit, pay careful attention to skin under the swimsuit.
- If your pet comes into contact with a bloom, wash it thoroughly with clean water to prevent blue-green algae ingestion while your pet cleans itself. If you believe your pet may have ingested dry or liquid algae contact a licensed veterinarian right away.
- Do not eat fish or shellfish caught or harvested in a bloom area.
- Respect any water-body closures by public health authorities.
- If you ingest blue-green algae or suspect that you may have and begin to experience symptoms, contact your health care provider or California Poison Control 1-800-222-1222.