

Q What about other outdoor activities?

Canoeing or kayaking (less water contact/spray), fishing (remove all fat, skin, and organs before cooking), camping, picnicking, hiking, biking, bird watching and other activities that do not involve water contact are encouraged.



Q My drinking water comes from a water source that is affected by algal blooms. Am I at risk?

People who draw water directly from an affected water body are advised that it may be dangerous to drink. If you or your drinking water supplier uses water from an affected source, call and ask if the water has been tested. If it has not been tested, it is recommended that you use an alternative water source not affected by the bloom.

Q What are state public health officials doing about blooms?

The Oregon Health Authority's Public Health Division has received state and federal funds to set up the Cyanobacteria Harmful Algae Bloom (CyanoHABs) Program that will help the division and its partners get a better understanding of where and how blooms are occurring and their impact on human health.

Q Where can I learn more?

Visit the cyanoHABs website at healthoregon.org/hab. You can also call 1-877-290-6767 or e-mail hab.health@odhsoha.oregon.gov.

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Quick Guide to Cyanobacteria Harmful Algae Blooms (CyanoHABs)



Q What is a cyanobacteria bloom?

Cyanobacteria, sometimes also called blue-green algae, are microscopic organisms that grow naturally in oceans and fresh waters. Under certain conditions, some cyanobacteria can grow into a large visible mass called a bloom.



Q Why are cyanobacteria blooms a health concern?

Not all blooms are harmful, but some species of cyanobacteria can produce toxins that can cause serious illness or death in pets, livestock, wildlife and humans.



Q How will I know if a toxic bloom is present?

Blooms can be bright green, blue-green, white, or brown. They may look like:

- Spilled paint
- Thick foam or scum on the water's surface
- A mat attached to rocks or sand

Unfortunately, you cannot tell if a bloom is toxic just by looking at it. If you come across areas of thick algae, take precaution by avoiding water or mat contact and keeping pets out of the water or from eating accumulated bloom material along the shore.



Q What are the health risks posed by exposure to toxic cyanobacteria?

Symptoms range from skin rash, diarrhea, cramps and vomiting to fainting, numbness, dizziness, tingling and paralysis. The most severe reactions occur when large amounts of water are swallowed. The chronic effects of long-term exposure to algae toxins are being studied.

Q How can I protect myself when camping or recreating in a lake where a bloom is present?

Do not wade or swim in the water and avoid power-boating activities that cause water to spray. Keep children and pets away from the water. Never drink or cook with the affected water. If you come in contact with the affected water, wash off thoroughly with another source of water.

Q Can I treat water with cyanobacteria toxins to make it safe?

No. Personal water filtration devices from outdoor recreational stores have not been proven to be effective. Boiling water will not remove the toxins.

Q Is it safe to eat fish?

Fish caught in affected waters pose unknown health risks. If you choose to eat them, remove all fat, skin and organs before cooking because toxins are more likely to collect in these tissues.