

Reporting HABs

To report HABs or a related illness, please contact your local public health authority.

Carson City Health and Human Services

Carson City, Lyon County, and Douglas County Residents

Phone: (775) 887-2190

Southern Nevada Health District

Clark County Residents

Phone: (702) 759-0588

Washoe County Health District

Washoe County Residents

Phone: (775) 328-2434

Rural Community Health Services

Residents of Remaining Counties

Phone: (775) 687-5162

Indian Health Services Office of Environmental Health and Engineering

Residents on Tribal Lands

Phone: (775) 784-5327



Contact

For additional information on this publication, contact the Office of Public Health Informatics and Epidemiology at 775-684-5967.

References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs)*. (2012, July 24). Retrieved July 10, 2014, from <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/hsb/hab/default.htm>

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Recreational Water Safety: Harmful Algae Blooms



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Frequently Asked Questions

What is an algae bloom?

Algae are microscopic organisms that grow naturally in oceans and fresh waters. Under certain conditions, some algae can grow to become a large visible mass called a bloom.

What are HABs?

Most algal blooms are not harmful; however, some types of algae can be dangerous and these types are called Harmful Algae Blooms (HABs). Although the name says algae, bluegreen algae are actually a type of harmful bacteria called cyanobacteria. HABs are algae blooms that produce toxins which can cause health risks to humans, pets, fish, birds, and other animals.

What does an algae bloom look like?

Algae blooms appear as thick foam or scum on the surface of the water. They may be bright green, blue-green, white or brown in color. Unfortunately, whether an algae bloom is toxic cannot be determined visibly. If you encounter areas of thick algae, take precaution by avoiding water contact and keeping away from the water.



What are the risks associated with exposure to HABs?

Skin irritation or rash is the most commonly reported health effect. Other symptoms range from diarrhea, cramps, and vomiting to fainting, numbness, dizziness, tingling, and paralysis. The most severe reactions occur when large amounts of water are swallowed.

How can I protect myself when I am recreating at a place where a bloom is present?

Stay out of the affected water. Keep children and pets away. Never drink or cook with the affected water. If you come in contact with the affected water, wash yourself thoroughly with a source of water that is known to be safe.

Can I treat algae-affected water to make it safe?

No. Personal water filtration devices purchased in outdoor recreational stores have not been proven to be effective, and boiling water will not remove the toxins.



Is it safe to eat fish exposed to algae blooms?

Fish caught in affected waters pose an unknown health risk. To avoid the possible health risk, do not eat fish caught in affected waters.

Can HABs Affect Animals?

Animals such as dogs, cats, birds, and livestock exposed to HABs may exhibit symptoms and conditions such as:

- Weakness
- Staggering
- Difficulty breathing
- Liver poisoning
- Convulsions

If your pet comes into contact with HABs consult a veterinarian right away.

