

- Q • What about other  
• outdoor activities?

Camping, picnicking, hiking, biking, bird watching and other activities that do not involve water contact are encouraged.



- Q • How can I report a bloom or  
• a related illness?

Reporting a harmful algal bloom or an animal or human illness associated with exposure to a bloom helps authorities understand where problems are occurring and to respond appropriately. The Freshwater Bloom Incident Form can be found at: <https://bit.ly/2qBgDWU> .

- Q • Where can I get more  
• information?

Visit the California HAB website at <https://mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs/do/bloomreport.html> .

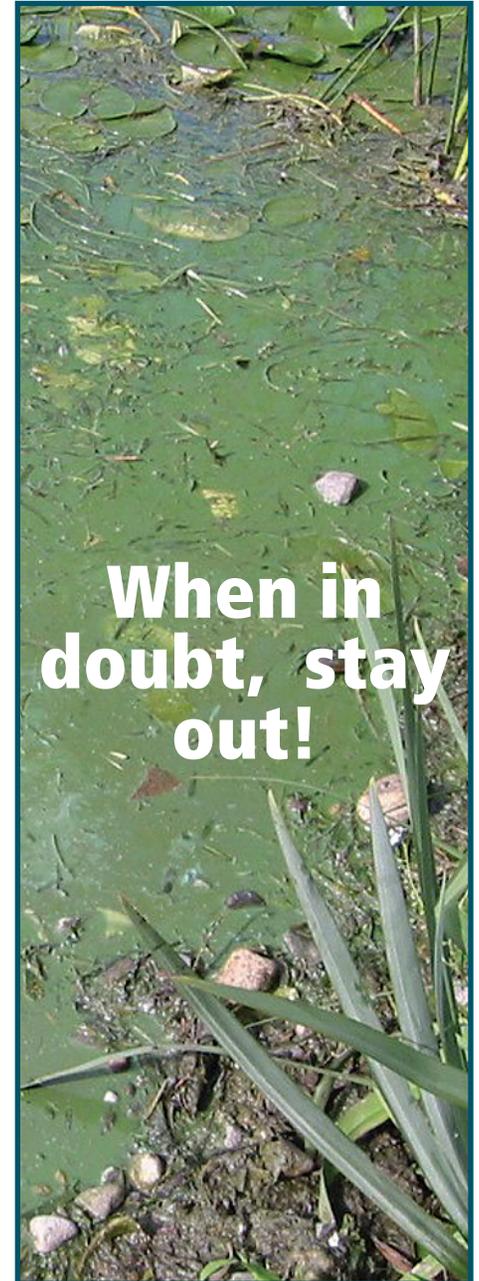
You may also call Napa County Public Health at (707) 253-4270 or Environmental Health at (707) 253-4417.



A Tradition of Stewardship  
A Commitment to Service

Working in Partnership  
Public Health and  
Environmental Health

## Harmful algae blooms: a public health concern



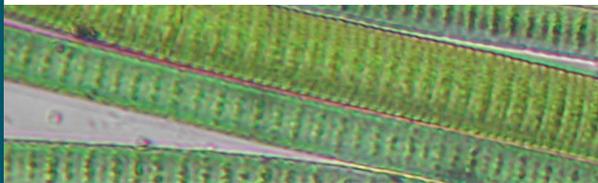
**When in  
doubt, stay  
out!**

## Q: What is an algae bloom?

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

## Q: Why are algae blooms a health concern?

Not all blooms are harmful, but some species of algae, such as cyanobacteria or blue-green algae, can produce toxins or poisons that can cause serious illness or death in pets, livestock, wildlife and humans.



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

Algae blooms appear as thick foam or scum on the water's surface. They can be bright green, blue-green, white or brown in color. Unfortunately, you cannot tell if an algae bloom is toxic just by looking at it. If you come across areas of thick algae, take precaution by avoiding water contact and keeping pets out of the water.



## Q: What are the health risks posed by exposure to toxic algae?

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. The chronic effects of long-term exposure to algae toxins are being studied.

## Q: When I am at a lake where a bloom is in progress, how can I protect myself?

Stay out of the affected water. Keep children and pets away. Pets that swim in the water and lick their coat are at particular risk. 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: When hiking, can I treat algae-affected water to make it safe?

No. Personal water filtration devices that may be purchased in 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.

