

Public Health Response to Cyanobacterial Harmful Algal Blooms in Recreational Fresh Water in Texas

What are cyanobacterial harmful algal blooms (cHAB)?

You can find cyanobacteria, also called blue-green algae, in all types of water. The algae grow in water with high amounts of nutrients and under the right conditions. They can overgrow and form scums and mats known as blooms. Blooms usually form in late summer and early fall.

Why worry about cHAB?

cHAB can release toxins (cyanotoxins) in water, which may harm people and animals. Possible symptoms after cyanotoxin exposure may include:

Human symptoms

- Skin, eye, nose and throat irritation
- Vomiting and diarrhea
- Headache
- Abdominal pain
- Loss of coordination or muscle twitching
- Liver and kidney damage

Animal symptoms

- Vomiting
- Fatigue
- Excessive drooling
- Difficulty breathing
- Convulsions
- Staggered walking
- Liver damage
- Death

You cannot tell if a bloom has toxins by looking at it. Only laboratory tests of water samples can confirm whether a bloom is toxic.



What do I do if I or my pet was possibly exposed to a cyanobacterial bloom?

- Rinse off with clean water
- Watch for symptoms
- Call the Texas Poison Center Network at 1-800-222-1222
- Consult with your physician or veterinarian

Where can I get more information?

For Texas-specific guidance visit <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/tscc-publications>

For questions or comments, contact DSHS' Environmental Surveillance and Toxicology Branch

1-888-681-0927

epitox@dshs.texas.gov