

Harmful Algal Blooms

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DEQ Coeur d'Alene Regional Office

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Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814
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DEQ Idaho Falls Regional Office

900 N. Skyline Drive, Suite B
Idaho Falls, ID 83402
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DEQ Lewiston Regional Office

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DEQ Pocatello Regional Office

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DEQ Twin Falls Regional Office

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Twin Falls, ID 83301
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Panhandle Health District

208-415-5200
www.phd1.idaho.gov
(serving Benewah, Bonner, Boundary, Kootenai,
and Shoshone counties)

Public Health - Idaho North Central District

208-799-3100
www.idahopublichealth.com
(serving Clearwater, Idaho, Latah, Lewis, and Nez
Perce counties)

Southwest District Health

208-455-5400
www.swdh.org
(serving Adams, Canyon, Gem, Owyhee, Payette,
and Washington counties)

Central District Health Department

208-375-5211
www.cdhd.idaho.gov
(serving Ada, Boise, Elmore and Valley counties)

South Central Public Health District

208-737-5900
www.phd5.idaho.gov
(serving Blaine, Camas, Cassia, Gooding, Jerome,
Lincoln, Minidoka, and Twin Falls counties)

Southeastern Idaho Public Health

208-233-9080
www.sdhdidaho.org
(serving Bannock, Bear Lake, Bingham, Butte,
Caribou, Franklin, Oneida, and Power counties)

Eastern Idaho Public Health District

208-522-0310
www.phd7.idaho.gov
(serving Bonneville, Clark, Custer, Fremont,
Jefferson, Lemhi, Madison, and Teton counties)

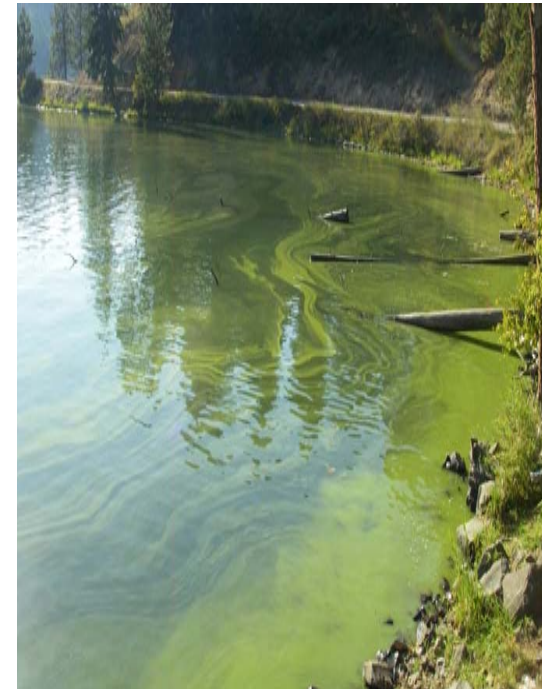


Photo provided by the Idaho Department of
Environmental Quality



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & WELFARE

What are Algal Blooms?

Algae are tiny organisms that are found in water. Most types of algae are beneficial; they produce oxygen and food for animals that live in water. However, when conditions are favorable (such as an increase in water temperature and available nutrients) algae can produce algal blooms. These algal blooms can sometimes change the color of the water. The blooms can be any color, but are most commonly blue-green in Idaho.

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, blue-green algae are actually a type of harmful bacteria called cyanobacteria. HABs are algal blooms that can produce toxins which can cause health risks to humans, pets, fish, birds, and other animals.

How are people and animals exposed to HABs?

People and animals can be exposed to HABs by swallowing water and/or touching the water during recreational activities, such as swimming, water skiing, and diving.

What are the health effects of HABs?

The most common health effect is skin and eye irritation. Other more severe health effects can be:

- difficulty breathing
- stomach pain
- nausea
- vomiting
- diarrhea
- dizziness
- numbness and tingling in lips, fingers, and toes

In some cases, exposure to large amounts of HABs can result in severe illness and death. If contact with HABs occurs and you or a family member has symptoms, consult a medical provider immediately.

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

- weakness
- staggering
- difficulty breathing
- liver poisoning and
- convulsions

Animals exposed to HABs may die within a few hours. HABs can also kill fish that live in water with HABs. **If your pet comes into contact with HABs consult a veterinarian right away.**

How can I prevent exposure to HABs?

- Do not go in or near any water that has an unusual color. It is also important not to go in water where HABs have been identified, even if the water looks clear. This includes keeping children, pets, and livestock out of the water.
- Do not use untreated water for drinking, bathing, cleaning, or cooking. Boiling water with HABs will not remove toxins; it may cause more toxins to be released. If your drinking water comes from a source with HABs, use an alternate source of drinking water such as bottled water.
- It is best to avoid eating fish from waters with HABs. The internal organs of fish and shellfish caught in waters with HABs can be poisonous and should not be eaten.
- Avoid any water sports (i.e., swimming, fishing, diving, water skiing, boating, etc.) in areas with HABs.

To report HABs call your local Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) office. For concerns about health effects from HABs please call your local Public Health District (numbers are located on the back of this brochure).

