



Contact with Cyanobacteria

Climate change is increasing temperatures and the frequency of heavy rains that cause run-off into ponds and lakes. Warm weather, sunlight, excess nutrients from rainfall, and stagnant or slow-moving water help cyanobacteria (also called blue-green algae) grow faster. Cyanobacteria can produce toxins that can make people and animals sick.

When cyanobacteria multiply, they create harmful algal blooms, often forming visible accumulations that can cause the water to appear slightly discolored, cloudy, or resemble pea soup or paint. People and animals can be exposed to cyanobacteria by touching it, drinking it, or breathing it in. Exposure can lead to gastrointestinal symptoms, skin rashes, irritation of eyes, nose, and throat, and neurological or liver damage.

Who is at higher risk?

- Children under age 5
- People who swim, wade, boat, jet-ski, kayak, or canoe in freshwater lakes, ponds, and rivers.
- People who are immunocompromised
- Pets



What can we do about it?

- Always look for posted warning signs at the entrance or along access points to a waterbody
- Know what harmful algal blooms look like:
 - Bright green or blue-green water
 - A layer of scum, matting, green specks or dots, or paint-like streaks on the water's surface
 - Murky or soup-like water conditions
- Take a close look at the water conditions and when in doubt, stay out!
- Seek medical care if you come into contact with algal blooms and experience gastrointestinal symptoms, skin rashes, or irritated eyes, nose, or throat