

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Be on the Lookout and Report Suspected Harmful Algal Blooms

Coldwater, MI – With the recent sunshine and high temperatures, the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency reminds residents to be on the lookout for Harmful Algal Blooms in area waters.

In mid-summer and into the fall, people may see scum, foams, globs, mats, green sheen, or what appears to be spilled paint on local lakes, ponds, rivers or streams. What you are looking at may be Cyanobacteria, also known as “blue-green algae, which can create Harmful Algal Blooms (HAB). Cyanobacteria are microscopic organisms that occur naturally and are common in many water bodies, but some can produce toxins that can make people and animals sick. When conditions are right, such as plenty of nutrients, warm temperatures, plenty of sunlight, and relatively calm conditions, they grow fast or ‘bloom’. Cyanobacteria blooms can be green, blue, purple, red, brown, yellow, or white.



You cannot tell if an algal bloom is harmful just by looking at it. Suspicious-looking algae can be reported to EGLE by calling the Environmental Assistance Center at 1-800-662-9278 or sending an e-mail, with photos, to AlgaeBloom@Michigan.gov.

If advisories, signs, or closings are posted about the possibility or the presence of a HAB, or coliform bacteria, such as E. coli, residents are encouraged pay attention to those warnings. Do not try to treat the water to kill the Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) because this may release cyanotoxins into the open water.

The following actions can be taken to reduce health risks commonly associated with blooms:

- Stay out of the water and do not let children or pets play in the water or near the shoreline where you suspect a Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) may be present. Unless the bloom covers a large part of the lake, people can limit their risk of exposure by using an unaffected part of the lake.
- Stay out of the water even if no scums are visible, but you cannot see your feet when standing knee-deep (after sediment has settled) avoid bathing, immersion of head, and/or ingestion of the water.
- Avoid recreational water sports like boating and jet skiing in visible scums or waters with a strong greenish coloration.
- If you or your child comes into contact with what could be an algal bloom, shower or wash as soon as possible with fresh water to remove algal material.
- If your pet comes into contact with what could be an algal bloom, rinse them off with fresh water right away to keep them from licking contaminated water from their coat.

Health effects of Harmful Algal Blooms may include:

- Skin contact may cause irritation such as rashes, hives, or skin blisters. It may also cause runny eyes and nose or asthma-like symptoms.
- Contact with water spray from recreational water sports, like boating and jet skiing, may cause skin, eye, nose, or throat irritation.
- Swallowing large amounts of water having cyanotoxins in it may cause stomach pain, vomiting, diarrhea, weakness, numbness, headaches, dizziness, or difficulty breathing.
- Frequently swallowing or swallowing large amounts of cyanotoxins can harm the liver or kidneys.

If you, your children, or pets become sick after contact with water that appears to have an Harmful Algal Bloom, contact your healthcare provider or veterinarian.

The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency is committed to helping people live healthier. For more information, contact your local office, visit our website, www.bhsj.org, follow us on Facebook www.facebook.com/BHSJCHA or Instagram www.instagram.com/bhsj_healthagency.

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