

# Harmful algal blooms

## How to protect yourself

### What is a harmful algal bloom?

Harmful algal blooms, or HABs, often occur when colonies of cyanobacteria, also known as "blue-green algae," grow out of control. These blooms can release toxins (cyanotoxins) which may affect the environment, people, and pets.

### How do I recognize a HAB?

HABs may look like green or blue paint, pea soup, or have a layer of scum, foam, or algal mats floating on the surface. They may appear in various shades of green, blue-green, yellow, brown, or white. See examples from the [Utah Division of Water Quality \(DWQ\)](#).

**It is not possible to know if a bloom is harmful just by looking at it.**

### How do I avoid HABs?

Check local and state recreational advisories before you visit natural water areas. DWQ updates [HAB advisories](#) during the outdoor recreational season between June and October. Often, advisories are also posted near the water. Follow these advisories to reduce your chance of becoming ill. If the water smells unusual or bad, looks discolored, or there are dead animals in it or around it, pets and humans should not interact with the water.



**Remember: when in doubt, stay out!**

### What should I do if I suspect there is a HAB?

#### Do not:

- touch or drink the water
- boat, water ski, or jet-ski as these activities can cause toxins to become airborne, and you are more likely to inhale them
- boil the water as this can concentrate the toxins in the water
- wash dishes, utensils, toys, or hands with the water

#### Do:

- rinse off immediately with clean water if you or your pets touch the water
- wash hands with clean water before you eat or prepare food



### Can I eat fish caught from waters that may have HABs?

Yes, as long as it was a live catch and it is properly cleaned, meaning the guts and the eggs are disposed of and not eaten. Do not consume fish you found deceased.

