

Basic Information about Harmful Algal Blooms

Inform Yourself to Make Safe Choices

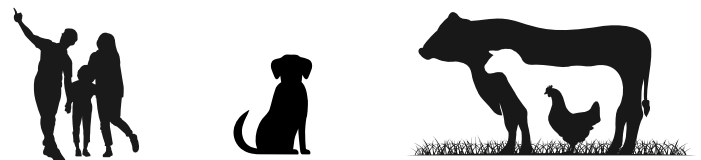
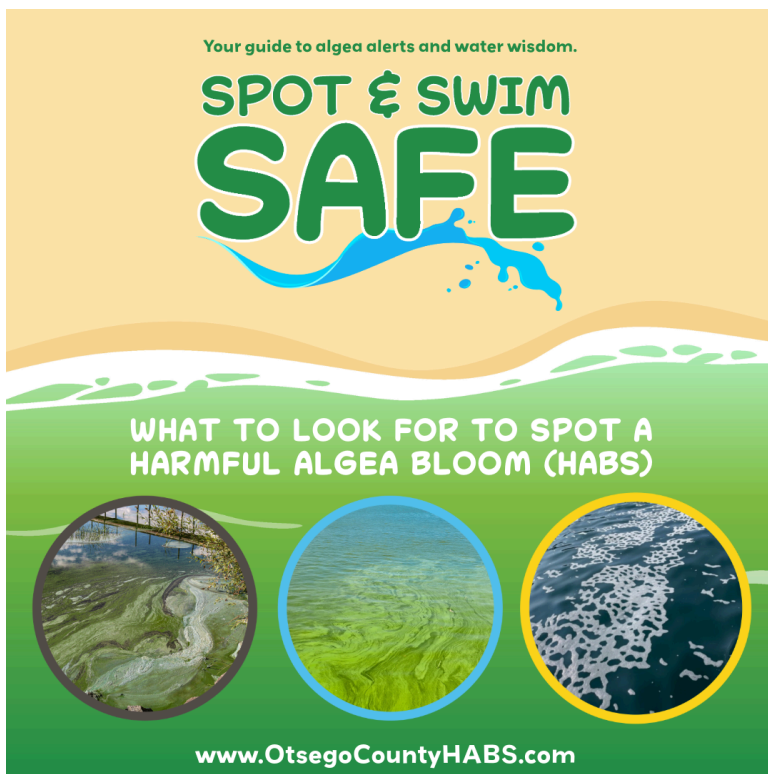
What are Harmful Algal Blooms?

Harmful algal blooms (HABs) are the rapid growth of algae or cyanobacteria that can cause harm to people, animals, or the local ecology. Harmful algae or cyanobacteria can look like foam, scum, paint, or mats on the surface of water and can be different colors. These blooms can produce toxins that make people and animals sick. Blooms occur in fresh water, such as lakes and rivers, and salt water, such as oceans or bays ([CDC 2021](#)).

Health Effects of HABs

Who is at risk of exposure?

People and pets can be exposed to toxins from harmful algal blooms by skin contacting water containing toxins while swimming or doing other activities in the water, drinking water containing toxins, breathing in tiny droplets in the air that contain toxins, and eating fish or shellfish that contain toxins ([CDC 2021](#)). Knowing the signs of harmful algal blooms and symptoms that may appear after exposure can help keep you and your family safe. Visit the [What](#) page to learn what harmful algal blooms can look like.



People, pets and livestock should avoid contact with any floating mats, scums, or discolored water. Colors can include shades of green, blue-green, yellow, brown or red. Never drink, prepare food, cook, or make ice with untreated surface water, whether or not algae blooms are present. In addition to toxins, untreated surface water may contain bacteria, parasites, or viruses that could cause illness if consumed. People not on public water supplies should not drink surface water during an algal bloom, even if it is treated, because in-home treatments such as boiling, disinfecting water with chlorine or ultraviolet (UV), and water filtration units do not protect people from HABs toxins (DEC).

Know it, Avoid it, Report it!



Think you have seen a HAB? Use this
QR code to report it to the DEC