

ATTENTION SWIMMERS, PADDLERS, AND FISHERMEN: TOXIC ALGAE

IMPACTS OF TOXIC ALGAE



Contaminated drinking water can make people and wildlife sick.



Algae blooms emit noxious fumes.



Eating contaminated fish or seafood can cause illness.



Recreational exposure can make people and pets sick.

BE ALGAE AWARE:

- Blue-Green Algae (Cyanobacteria) naturally occur in aquatic ecosystems, but toxic algae blooms have been very problematic in freshwater lakes and coastal ponds on Long Island in recent years, including:

Agawam Lake (Southampton)

Wainscott Pond (East Hampton)

Mecox Bay (Southampton)

Georgica Pond (East Hampton)

Mill Pond (Water Mill)

Hook Pond (East Hampton)

Sagg Pond (Bridgehampton)

Fort Pond (East Hampton)

- Symptoms of exposure to toxic blue-green algae can include abdominal cramps, nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, rash, or respiratory irritation. This is also a danger to dogs from drinking affected pond water.

TAKE ACTION:

- To report a suspected blue-green algae bloom near you, contact the Suffolk County Department of Health Services' Office of Ecology at **631.852.5760**.
- If algae exposure makes you sick, **contact your healthcare provider immediately** and the Suffolk County Department of Health Services at **631.852.5760**.
- For detailed information about cyanobacteria blooms, please visit the Suffolk County's Website at **<http://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/HealthServices/EnvironmentalQuality/Ecology/MarineWaterQualityMonitoring/HarmfulAlgalBlooms/Cyanobacteria.aspx>**
- For a comprehensive list of affected waterbodies visit the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Notification Page at **<http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/83310.html>**
- You can also report incidences of ocean illness to the Surfrider Foundation at **<https://sickatthebeach.crowdmap.com/>**

What are Cyanobacteria?

Cyanobacteria, or blue-green algae, are found in marine and freshwater environments. They are usually present in low numbers, but under favorable conditions of sunlight, temperature, and nutrient concentrations, can form massive blooms that discolor the water and can create scum and floating mats on the water's surface. Some species of Cyanobacteria produce toxins that can cause health problems in humans and animals. Despite being named "blue-green algae," cyanobacteria can look green, blue, red, yellow or brown.

How are humans exposed to Cyanobacteria?

People are generally exposed while recreating in bloom affected areas. Exposure can occur through ingestion, skin contact, and inhalation of airborne droplets with toxins while swimming. Consuming shellfish from affected areas is also very dangerous.

How harmful are these blooms?

Skin contact with the organisms can cause irritation of the skin (rash or skin blisters), eyes, nose, and throat, and inflammation of the respiratory tract. Swallowing water containing high levels of toxin can cause nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and diarrhea. Liver and nervous system impacts in animals and people have occurred in severe cases, and dogs and other animals have even died after ingesting algae laden water.

Are some individuals more at risk?

Yes, children and pets are at a much higher risk of exposure from ingesting waters in affected areas.

What should I do if I think I swam in waters containing Cyanobacteria?

Wash with warm soapy water and remove clothing to avoid contact with trapped algal cells, as these may cause skin irritations. If any symptoms develop, contact your physician immediately. In any event, please alert the Suffolk County Department of Health Services at (631) 852-5760.

What should I do if I think I my pet entered waters containing Cyanobacteria?

Wash your pet with warm soapy water. If any symptoms develop, contact your Veterinarian. Also, please alert the Suffolk County Department of Health Services at (631)-852-5760.

What can I do to prevent harmful algal blooms?

Don't use chemical fertilizers and pesticides on your lawn. They don't stay there but pollute local waters with excess nutrients that cause toxic bloom conditions in coastal ponds and bays. By planting native plants, building healthy soils naturally, and shaping your garden to retain water and prevent runoff, you can help protect local water quality.

Get your septic inspected and pumped regularly - every 3 years or less if you live on the water. Improperly maintained septic are the number one source of nitrogen pollution on the East End. Encourage the Suffolk County Department of Health to approve the installation of new septic technologies that will stop polluting our waterways.