

Routes of Exposure

People are exposed to HABs in different ways depending on the type(s) of cyanotoxins involved. The three most common methods of exposure are:

- Ingestion – Drinking HABs contaminated tap water from a public water system during a drinking water advisory or the incidental/accidental swallowing of contaminated water such as during water-related recreational activities.
- Skin Contact – Swimming, skiing, tubing and other recreational activities in HABs contaminated waters. Skin contact can also occur during hand washing, food preparation, and bathing.
- Inhalation – Breathing aerosolized water droplets (misting) of HABs-contaminated water from recreational activities such as jet-skiing or power boating. Outside of recreational waters, inhalation may occur from sinks and showers.



Symptoms of HAB-Related Illness

See a healthcare provider if you experience any of the following symptoms after being exposed to a HAB:

- Severe diarrhea and vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Kidney toxicity
- Weakness
- Numbness
- Dizzy/light-headed
- Difficulty breathing
- Rashes
- Hives
- Runny nose
- Sore throat
- Allergies

References and Additional Information

CDC Environmental Hazards & Health Effects, Harmful Algal Blooms, www.cdc.gov/habs
Ohio Department of Health Harmful Algal Blooms webpages, www.odh.ohio.gov/habs
State of Ohio resource on HABs information, www.ohioalgaefinfo.com

See other factsheets on Ohio Department of Health webpage for more information on HABs in drinking water, recreational water, and effects on animal health.

Actions to Take

When planning to visit a water body, review the following actions in case of a HAB or a HAB-related illness.

- Use BeachGuard to view current Ohio HAB and *E. coli* advisories: www.publicapps.odh.ohio.gov/beachguardpublic
- Report a sighting of a HAB using the bloom report form: www.epa.ohio.gov/portals/35/hab/HAB_Report_Form.pdf
 - Send completed reports to HABMailbox@epa.ohio.gov
- Illness reports and questions should be discussed with your local health district (LHD). Find your LHD using the webtool: www.odh.ohio.gov/GetMyLHD
 - For drinking water HAB illnesses, use the appropriate form: www.odh.ohio.gov/HABDrinkingForm
 - For recreational water HAB illnesses, use the form: www.odh.ohio.gov/HABRecreationForm
 - For HAB illnesses in pets, complete the form: www.odh.ohio.gov/HABAnimalForm

Contact Us

Ohio Department of Health, Bureau of Environmental Health and Radiation Protection
246 N High St, Columbus, Ohio 43215
Phone: (614) 644-1390 Email: BEH@odh.ohio.gov