

HAB-related Illnesses in California

What are HAB-related Illnesses?

[Harmful algal blooms \(HABs\)](#) occur when cyanobacteria (also known as blue-green algae) and algae in freshwater and estuarine waterbodies pose a risk to humans, animals, and the environment. Humans and animals can become sick after eating or contacting cyanobacteria, water contaminated with cyanotoxins, or algal mats. Cyanotoxins may also accumulate in fish and shellfish. Symptoms may occur within minutes or days following exposure and may include:

- irritation of skin, ears, eyes, nose, or throat
- abnormal breathing (coughing, wheezing, asthma-like symptoms)
- vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain
- headaches, agitation, weakness
- seizures and death (in animals)

How can I report a HAB-related illness?

Please report any suspected HAB or potential HAB-related illness by any of these methods:

- Fill out the [Online Bloom Report Form](#) including the illness information section.
- Call (844) 729-6466 (toll free).
- Email CyanoHAB.Reports@waterboards.ca.gov

How can I protect myself, my family, and my pets from HAB-related illness?

- Check if a waterbody has a reported bloom on the [HAB Reports Map](#), contact the waterbody manager, and look for [posted advisory signs](#).
- Check to see if the water has [scum or is discolored](#).
- Practice [Healthy Water Habits](#) at your local lake, reservoir, river, or stream.

Learn more on the [California HABs Portal](#)

(<https://mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs/>):

- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for [Freshwater and Estuarine Harmful Algal Blooms](#)
- [FAQs for Human Health](#) and [Resources for Medical Professionals](#)
- FAQs for [Dogs, Livestock and other Large Animals](#) and [Resources for Veterinarians](#)
- FAQs for [Fish](#) and [Wildlife](#)
- [Visual Guide Factsheet For HABs](#)

Who is tracking HAB-related Illnesses in California?

The interagency HAB-related Illness Workgroup investigates and tracks potential HAB-related illnesses in humans and animals throughout California, and includes staff from the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, State Water Resources Control Board, California Department of Public Health (CDPH), and California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

How many HAB-related Illnesses have been reported for California?

In 2018-2019, CDPH reported 41 HAB-related cases from California to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [One Health Harmful Algal Bloom System](#) (OHHABS; <https://www.cdc.gov/habs/ohhabs.html>).

Total Reports to OHHABS 2018-2019	
Dog	9
Livestock	0
Wildlife	5
Fish	12
Human	15
TOTAL	41

In which counties did these reported HAB-related illnesses occur?

