

Blue-Green Algae (Cyanobacteria)

Safe Recreational Water Practices within Sacramento County

Blue-Green Algae are some of the oldest organisms on Earth and can be found in fresh- and salt-water bodies throughout the world. They prefer warm stagnant nutrient rich water and are found most often in ponds, lakes, and slow moving rivers. Some species of Blue-Green Algae produce powerful toxins which can be extremely harmful to humans, pets, and wildlife if ingested. Certain times of the year when conditions are right (warm temperatures, low water flow, etc.), the algae can bloom forming thick mats or crusts that rest on top of the water. Other species of Blue-Green Algae can cloud the water giving it a greenish to blue tint or a pea soup look.



The County of Sacramento Environmental Management Department urges all individuals using recreational waters throughout the County to use the following Safe Recreational Water Practices listed below:

- **Do not drink river water**
- **Look for signs of algae blooms, discolored water, and/or floating scums and mats**
- **If Blue-Green Algae is suspected or there are visible signs of floating scum, mats, and/or algae droplets in the water, children and pets should avoid using the water or be monitored to ensure river water is not consumed.**
- **Rinse yourself and your pets thoroughly with potable water after recreational water activities are over.**
- **Consume fish only after removing guts and liver, and rinsing fillets in clean water**
- **Get medical attention immediately if you think that you or your family might be having a reaction. Be sure to tell the medical professional about possible contact with blue-green algae**

Exposure to some toxins produced by blue-green algae can cause symptoms including: rashes; allergic reaction; skin, throat and eye irritation; gastrointestinal upset; headache; and general malaise. High levels of toxins could cause liver and neurotoxicity. Children are at higher risk of health impacts because they tend to ingest more water when swimming. Pets are at higher risk because they drink the water or clean algae off their fur. For further information, visit emd.saccounty.net