A harmful algal bloom (HAB) is an overgrowth of algae in a water body that causes water quality and aquatic life problems. Some HABs produced by bacteria can create toxins that may also harm people, animals, and the local environment.

**HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOMS**

**HOW TO IDENTIFY A HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOM**

- A harmful algal bloom can make the water appear green, brown, gold, or red. They often produce toxic scum, mats, foams, or paint-like streaks in the water or clumps on the shore.
- However, only professional water testing can confirm if HABs and toxins are present. State and local governments often test water for bacteria or toxins to protect water quality as part of their water quality standards program.

**WHO CAN GET SICK FROM A HAB?**

- **Adults and children**
  - **Skin Contact**: Ear, eye, nose, and throat irritation, and redness.
  - **Ingestion**: Vomiting, diarrhea, liver and kidney damage, and numbness.

- **Household pets**

- **Livestock**

- **Fish and shellfish**

**WHEN IN DOUBT, STAY OUT!**

- **Stay away from the water when you suspect a harmful algal bloom is present.**
- **Symptoms can vary depending on how the person or animal was exposed, and whether the HAB is in salt or fresh water.**

**WHAT TO DO IF EXPOSED TO A HAB**

- **Showers immediately**
  - Ear, eye, nose, and throat irritation, and redness.
  - Vomiting, diarrhea, liver and kidney damage, and numbness.

- **Call your poison control center for advice**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO:**

www.epa.gov/cyanoHABs