LOOK OUT FOR
HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOMS

A harmful algal bloom (HAB) is an overgrowth of algae in a water body that can affect water quality and health. Some HABs produce toxins that can make the water unsafe or unpleasant. Like all plants, algae need light, nutrients, and space to grow. When nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus are too high, algae can grow faster than the water can handle, leading to HABs. Some HABs are caused by human activities that add these nutrients to the water. Others are caused by changes in the environment that make the water easier for algae to grow in.

When in doubt, stay out!

Stay away from the water when you suspect a harmful algal bloom is present.

Who can get sick from a HAB?

Adults and children

Household pets

Unhealthy

Fish and shellfish

Routes & Symptoms of Exposure to HABs:

Symptoms can vary depending on how the person or animal was exposed, and whether the HAB is in salt or fresh water.

Routes of Exposure:

Skin contact

Ingestion

Inhalation

Symptoms of Exposure:

Eye, nose, mouth, and throat irritation, headache, and nausea

Respiratory:

Burning, itchy eyes and throat

Altered gait, coordination, and balance

Headache, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, and nervousness

What to do if exposed to a HAB:

See a doctor or call 911 for emergencies.

Contact your local health department or use the E-mail us at BBMWD@BBMWD.net

For more information or to report possible harmful algal blooms:
IDENTIFYING A HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOM (HAB)

This quick guide provides a visual comparison of appearance and color and odor that can be helpful in distinguishing non-toxic green algae and aquatic plants from potentially toxic cyanobacteria blooms or harmful algal blooms (HABs).

### Non-toxic Algae & Plants

#### Appearance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rooted Plants</th>
<th>Paint or Soup</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Rooted Plants Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Paint or Soup Image" /></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Floating Plants</th>
<th>Scum, Bubbling or Spit-like Floating Foam</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Floating Plants Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Scum, Bubbling or Spit-like Floating Foam Image" /></td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant-like Algae</th>
<th>Lettuce or Chopped Grass</th>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Plant-like Algae Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image6" alt="Lettuce or Chopped Grass Image" /></td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Filamentous Algae</th>
<th>Spires</th>
<th>Mats</th>
<th>Blobs</th>
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<td><img src="image8" alt="Spires Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image9" alt="Mats Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image10" alt="Blobs Image" /></td>
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**ATTENTION:** Cyanobacteria blooms/HABs can produce toxins that are harmful to humans and animals.
**COLOR**

Algae and aquatic plants are usually green but can appear yellow or brown as they die down.

Cyanobacteria get their name from their blue-green pigment but blooms can often look green, blue-green, green-brown, or red.

**ODOR**

Algae and aquatic plants are usually neutral or leafy in scent, but when dying or dead smell musty/rotting.

Cyanobacteria blooms can have a distinctive smell, sometimes described as gasoline, septic or fishy.

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**Have you seen a HAB?**

Report HABs online! [http://mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs/do/bloomreport.html](http://mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs/do/bloomreport.html)

Or call 1(844) 729-6466

Find out more on the California HABs Portal [http://mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs](http://mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs)

Need more help with identification? [http://mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs/resources/field.html](http://mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs/resources/field.html)