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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## BLUE-GREEN ALGAE HEALTH CONCERNS FOR HUMANS AND ANIMALS

*Health officials urge caution*

STOCKTON, CA (July 13, 2021) – Warm temperatures are here, creating conditions for blue-green algae to rapidly build or bloom on the surface of reservoirs, rivers, creeks, lagoons, lakes, and ponds.

San Joaquin County Public Health and Environmental Health officials and the state Regional Water Quality Control Board urge swimmers, boaters, and recreational water users to avoid contact with blue-green algae (BGA), also known as cyanobacteria. The algae blooms may produce toxins that can present a health hazard to humans and animals. San Joaquin County Public Health Officer Dr. Maggie Park advises, “To avoid illness, exercise caution and observe signage that warns visitors to avoid active algae blooms.”

The algae blooms can look like green, blue-green, white, or brown foam and scum floating on the water. Children are especially vulnerable as they play on the shoreline, drink more water than adults when swimming, and are a smaller body size. Dogs are also vulnerable to BGA poisoning. Many dogs are lost each year as they tend to drink more water and lick algae off their fur.

### Human Exposure General Health Effects:

- Rashes or other skin irritations
- Allergy-like reactions, runny nose or sore throat
- Toxins ingested in large amounts can cause sharp, severe stomach problems like diarrhea and vomiting, liver damage, numb limbs, tingling fingers and toes, or dizziness

### Animal Exposure Health Effects:

- Weakness, staggering
- Difficulty breathing
- Convulsions
- Vomiting and diarrhea
- Death, if not treated

## Statewide Guidance on Harmful Algae Blooms:

- Avoid wading and swimming in water containing visible blooms or water containing algae scum or mats, which are most often present at the shoreline.
- Take care that pets and livestock do not drink the water or swim through scums, mats, or lick their fur after going in the water. Wash exposed pets in clean drinking water.
- If no algae scums or mats are visible, watch young children and warn them not to swallow the water.
- Do not drink, cook, or wash dishes with untreated water.
- Consume fish only after removing guts and liver, and rinse fillets in clean drinking water. Mussels should not be consumed.
- Get medical treatment right away if you think you, your pet, or your livestock might have been poisoned by blue-green algaetoxins.

Jasjit Kang, Director of the Environmental Health Department reports, “Environmental Health Department staff have posted health advisory signs at local marinas cautioning swimmers, boaters, and recreational users to avoid contact with algal blooms.”

# CAUTION

**Harmful algae may be present in this water.  
For you and your family’s safety:**

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 <p><b>Stay away</b> from scum, and cloudy or discolored water.</p>	 <p><b>Do not</b> let pets and other animals go into or drink the water, or eat scum on the shore.</p>
 <p><b>Keep children away</b> from algae in the water or on the shore.</p>	 <p><b>Do not</b> drink this water or use it for cooking.</p>
 <p>For fish caught here, <b>throw away guts and clean fillets</b> with tap water or bottled water before cooking.</p>	 <p><b>Do not</b> eat shellfish from this water.</p>

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❖ **Call your doctor or veterinarian** if you or your pet get sick after going in the water  
❖ For more information on harmful algae, go to <https://mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs/index.html>  
❖ For a listing of locations where harmful algal blooms have been voluntarily reported go to [https://mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs/where/freshwater\\_events.html](https://mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs/where/freshwater_events.html)

The California Water Boards recommends you practice healthy habits while enjoying the outdoors at your local lake, river, or stream. More information on healthy water habits can be found at [mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs/do/](https://mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs/do/).

### For more information, visit:

- California Harmful Algal Bloom Portal: <https://mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs/do/>
- Report potential harmful algal bloom: <https://mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs/do/bloomreport.html>
- California Water Quality Monitoring Council: <https://mywaterquality.ca.gov/index.html>
- California State Water Resources Control Board: <https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/>
- California Department of Public Health: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DEODC/EHIB/EAS/Pages/HABs.aspx>
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/habs/index.html>
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: <https://www.epa.gov/nutrientpollution/harmful-algal-blooms>