HEALTHY AND SAFE SWIMMING

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) urges beachgoers and those using and maintaining swimming pools, spas, and water parks to focus on simple steps that can be taken to help ensure a healthy and safe swimming experience for everyone.

Information available through the links below describes the role of swimmers, aquatics and beach staff, residential pool owners, and public health officials in preventing drowning, swimming-related injuries, and waterborne illnesses. Click to learn more about swimmer hygiene and how you can take an active role to protect yourself while swimming and prevent the spread of germs:

Recreational Water Illnesses
Drowning and Swimming-Related Injuries
Pool and Spa Safety
Swimming in Natural Waters
Beach Monitoring
Harmful Algae Blooms

Most algae do not harm people, wildlife, or the environment. But some types of algae in Virginia can be dangerous. Algae species in fresh and salt water may multiply rapidly when environmental conditions are favorable for their development. Most algal blooms are not harmful but some do affect fish and humans, as well as other animals like birds and marine mammals. These are known as Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs). If water is discolored, murky, has an odor, or if there appears to be a film on the water surface, swimming is not advised for humans or pets. Learn more about HABs and how to report them by clicking on the Harmful Algae Blooms link above.

Healthy Swimming Pledge

For more information on waterborne pathogens, please see the links in the left-hand sidebar under Waterborne Hazards Control.
HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOMS (HABS)

HAB Hotline: 1-888-238-6154

*NEW* - Click Here to Report a HAB Online

Algae are naturally-occurring microscopic organisms that are found in fresh and salt waters of Virginia and around the world. Many are beneficial because they are major producers of oxygen and food for many of the animals that live in these waters.

Most algae do not harm people, wildlife, or the environment. But some types of algae in Virginia can be dangerous. Algae species in fresh and salt water may multiply rapidly when environmental conditions are favorable for their development. The great number of algal cells in the water results in what is called an algal bloom.

A bloom often (but not always) results in a color change in the water. Algal blooms can be any color, but the most common ones are red or brown and are known as either "red" or "brown" tides. Most algal blooms are not harmful but some do affect fish and humans, as well as other animals like birds and marine mammals. These are known as Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs). If water is discolored, murky, has an odor, or if there appears to be a film on the water surface, swimming is not advised for humans or pets. Please contact the HAB Hotline to report your observations and so that surveillance of the area can be conducted.
ALGAL BLOOM SURVEILLANCE MAP

The map is updated regularly during the months of March – November. Please click on map points for more information.
2017 - HAB Resources Toolkit

- Contains the important HAB webpages and resources categorized by specialties
- Easy to access
# 2017 - HAB Resources Toolkit

## Harmful Algal Bloom Guidance & Resources

### HAB Webpage, Surveillance Map & General Information

Harmful Algal Bloom - Main Page

It is the official VDH-DEE-HAB website. It contains information and resources related to the Harmful Algal Bloom Program.

[www.HarmfulAlgaeVA.com](http://www.HarmfulAlgaeVA.com)

### Harmful Algal Bloom Surveillance Map

It reflects the status of algae blooms during HAB season (March-November), as well as the results of algae bloom samples. The map is updated weekly or as needed year around.


### HAB Online Report Form

The form provides an option for online HAB report submission. It can be utilized by the public and environmental health professionals. It provides an easy way for the primary task force members to communicate HAB reports received by them with one another and to request assistance.


### Temporary Feature Page - A. monilatum

Example of a bloom webpage for featuring a bloom of significance and a link to the FAQs. These pages facilitate public outreach during bloom events.


### HAB Taskforce Response Plan (2017)

The response plan is intended as a brief, public-facing document which articulates the function, roles, and responsibilities of the primary taskforce agencies and expectations on services provided by each during HAB events.


### VDH Universal Talking Points


### VDH Brochures:

- **Harmful Algal Blooms and other Organisms of Concern in Coastal Waters**
- **Cyanobacteria (Blue-Green Algae)**
- **Poison Hotline & Map of Centers**

### HAB Process Flow

The flow chart is intended to serve as a job aid for VDH staff for the coordinating, reporting, and investigating of HAB events.


### CDC – HAB Associated Illness and Syndromes

[http://www.cdc.gov/hab/diseases.html](http://www.cdc.gov/hab/diseases.html)

### VDH – Marine Toxins and Associated Syndromes


### VDH – Cyanobacteria Toxins and Health Effects


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*VDH HAB Human Screening Form*

Is intended to facilitate the investigation of a reported waterborne exposure, such that the local health district can more easily determine whether or not the more comprehensive OHHABS human health exposure form is necessary.

*VHHABS Human Form and Guidance*

May be utilized by local staff when one or more exposures are reported.

Event and Case Definitions

- Tables offer definition of HAB event and human HAB associated case.


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*Additional Resources for Environmental Health Specialists*


*For completed forms to DEE (804-664-8151)*
Messaging for HABs

- Signage
- Press Releases
- FAQs
- Fact Sheets
- Brochures
  - “Working Waterfront”
- Talking Points
- HAB Digest

**BE AWARE OF ALGAE BLOOMS**

During an algae bloom, water may have surface scum, mats, or films with red, green, white streaks or glops.

**REPORT BLOOMS TO THE**

Harmful Algal Bloom Hotline 888-238-6154

This slide is not properly used. Fish caught from water with an algae bloom. Thoroughly clean the fish. Do not feed to cats and pets. Wash hands, surfaces, and utensils with soap and water.

The Virginia Harmful Algal Bloom Task Force works to protect public health. Learn more at www.HABTaskForce.org.

Contact your Local Health Department at www.VDH.Virginia.gov

**Example Harmful Algal Bloom Press Release**

**VDH DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

**News Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Month, XX,

Release #XX

For More Information Contact

ATTENTION

**POSSIBLY HARMFUL ALGAE HAVE BEEN DETECTED**

Water may be harmful to humans, animals, or the environment. Take steps to prevent or minimize exposure.

- **WARNING**
  - Avoid swimming in affected areas; use designated recreation areas.
  - Keep pets and domestic animals away from water; wash pets and domestic animals after exposure.
  - Wear protective clothing and gloves when handling or collecting water samples.
  - Do not drink untreated water; boil water for at least one minute before consuming.

**SPOILAGE MAY CAUSE ILLNESS**

Call your doctor or veterinarian if you or your animals experience illness or death.

**ALGAL BLOOMS:**

**INFORMATION FOR VIRGINIA'S WORKING WATERFRONT**

What is an algal bloom?

Algae are naturally occurring microscopic organisms that are found in fresh and salt waters of Virginia and around the world. Algae may multiply rapidly when environmental conditions are favorable, such as after a rain has washed nutrients from the land into the river. A great number of algal cells in the water results in what is called an algal bloom.
HAB Sampling

- **Sampling Protocol Developed**

Harmful Algae Bloom Sample Collection Protocol for Virginia Waters

*The sampler should contact the lab to make arrangements for analysis to ensure proper turn around time and scheduling.*

**SITE INSPECTION:**
- Record observations for each sample taken (location in body of water, color of bloom, presence of odor, scum, dead fish, proximity to culverts, docks, recreational beaches, etc. Photos of conditions at the site are useful.
- Record environmental parameters including water temperature, salinity, pH, dissolved oxygen, conductivity, and turbidity (Secchi depth).
- Record site name, latitude and longitude of sample location, and position of sample taken (ie: scum layer, sub surface layer (~.5 m), bottom (+.5 m), ect...).

- **HAB Kits distributed to 8 health districts**
Training Section In HAB Toolkit

HAB Training

HAB Training Main Page

HAB 101 (7/25/17) – Training Video

[ARCHIVED in TRAIN – Course ID 1072636]

Note – for each viewing, you’ll need to complete a course evaluation.

Presentation PDFs

Training Agenda


https://www.train.org/virginia/course/1072636/

Need a TRAIN Account?


“Harmful Algal Blooms (HAB) 101 – Bloom Basics and Public Health Response” featured information about algae blooms, the VA HAB Task Force, and provided targeted training sessions for VDH epidemiology, environmental health, and public information staff.
New Online HAB Report Form

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New Online HAB Report Form

- Blooms & Fish kills
- Provides notification to primary responders – allows responders request assistance
- Provides submitter with a confirmation email with links to HAB info and contacts
Questions?

www.SwimHealthyVA.com
1-888-238-6514

For comments and recommendations contact:
Margaret Smigo
Waterborne Hazards Control
Program Coordinator
VDH-OEPI-DEE
Margaret.Smigo@vdh.virginia.gov
(804)864-8128