

# Discovery Bay Blue-green Algae

October 24, 2017

Starting in summer 2015, Environmental Health has responded to citizen complaints about the presence of Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) in Discovery Bay. The HABs toxin, microcystin, has been found in some of the water samples. In summer of 2016, Environmental Health started sampling every 2-3 weeks in various parts of Discovery Bay instead of just conducting complaint sampling. The sampling results for summer 2017 are kept updated on the [map](#) ([pdf/algae-map-discovery-bay.pdf](#)).

Environmental Health advises residents and visitors to Discovery Bay to avoid coming into contact with water in affected areas. Avoiding contact with the water is also advised for pets. Based on the results obtained from the EPA and in accordance with state guidance, Environmental Health will post public access areas and advise residents of harmful toxin levels via social media and other electronic communication.

## FAQs

### Is it safe for me to go in the water in Discovery Bay?

It depends where you are and if there are advisories posted in the area.

A [CAUTION](#) ([pdf/2017-caution.pdf](#)) sign means:

- Do not swim or wade near algae or scum
- Keep your children away from algae in the water or on the shore
- Do not drink the water or use it for cooking
- Do not let pets or livestock go into or drink the water or eat scum on the shoreline
- Do not eat shellfish from the water

A [WARNING](#) ([pdf/2017-warning.pdf](#)) sign means:

- No swimming
- Stay away from scum, and cloudy or discolored water
- Do not use these waters for drinking or cooking
- Do not let pets or livestock go into or drink the water, or go near the scum
- Do not eat shellfish from these waters
- For fish caught here, throw away guts and clean fillets with tap water or bottled water before cooking

A [DANGER](#) ([pdf/2017-danger.pdf](#)) sign means:

## RESOURCES

- [What you need to know about Blue-Green Algae](#)
- [CCHS Information on Blue-Green Algae](#)
- [Cyanobacteria Blooms FAQs - CDC](#)
- [California Water Quality Monitoring Council](#)
- [CA Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment: Information on Microcystin](#)
- [US Environmental Protection Agency: CyanoHAB website](#)

- Stay out of the water until further notice. Do not touch scum in the water or on shore.
- Do not let pets or livestock drink or go into the water or go near the scum
- Do not eat fish or shellfish from these waters
- Do not use the water for drinking or cooking. Boiling or filtering will not make the water safe.

Exposure to blue-green algae can cause rashes, skin and eye irritation, allergic reactions, gastrointestinal upset, and other effects. At high levels, exposure can result in serious illness or death, according to the [California Department of Public Health](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/environhealth/water/Pages/Bluegreenalgae.aspx) (<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/environhealth/water/Pages/Bluegreenalgae.aspx>)

### **What about my pets?**

Keep pets out of water with blue-green algae blooms. Dogs are especially vulnerable to getting sick and there have been reports through the years of dogs dying following exposure associated with drinking the water and licking algae from their fur after wading/swimming in water with blue-green algae blooms.

### **Is there an issue with drinking water?**

No, contamination only affects recreational water areas, not drinking water from the tap in Discovery Bay.

### **Who should I contact if I swam in the water and now have symptoms?**

If you think you or someone else is displaying symptoms of blue-green algae poisoning, contact your health care provider or the California Poison Center Help Hotline at 1-800-222-1222.

### **What can I do to get rid of blue-green algae in Discovery Bay?**

We do not recommend attempting to treat or remove the algae. Blue-green algae blooms are natural to the environment's food chain, and eventually dissipate on their own. Chemical treatment is often ineffective and can result in more toxins being released into the water as algae cells die, as well as unintended effects on other species in the area.

Algae blooms result from changes in water conditions that encourage sudden growth of the species. The best way to reduce and prevent blooms is to reduce water pollution, particularly from runoff containing fertilizers or pesticides. Pick up trash dumped in waterways, and make sure all household sewer systems are working properly.

Treating aquariums with a hydrogen peroxide solution is a common way to get rid of some kinds of algae. But the Delta is not a closed system like an aquarium, so the results would be unpredictable, both in terms of efficacy and impact on the environment.