

Example 2: Recreational water managers in Indiana use a 4-level alert system, based on testing results. Signs contain information on how to identify a harmful algal bloom (HAB), and the effects a HAB may have on people, pets and fish.

Does the Beach Have Blue-green Algae?

Blue-green algae can be found in many of Indiana's lakes and reservoirs. Swimmers, boaters and pet owners can enjoy water based recreation, but should be on the lookout for evidence of harmful algal blooms (HABs).

Blue-Green Algae

Algae of many species occur naturally in Indiana's lakes and reservoirs. Blue-green algae is common and not a problem unless levels are high. When levels are high, toxins may be produced as algae cells grow and die.

What Does Blue-Green Algae Look Like?

When conditions are right, HABs may occur. An HAB occurs when algae reproduce quickly, creating mats of algae or discoloration of the water because of the large quantity of algae cells present. High nutrient levels from lawn and agricultural fertilizers, sunlight and warm, shallow water all contribute to HABs.

Colors may vary from green, blue-green, brown, black, white, purple, red or black.

Algae may look like a film, crust, puff balls, grass clippings, dots, spilled paint, pea soup, foam, wool, streaks or cottage cheese curds.

Watch for signs that might indicate a blue-green algae bloom in this lake or reservoir and report your sighting to the property office.

How Can Exposure to High Levels of Blue-Green Algae Affect People, Pets and Fish?



Swimmers and boaters

Precautions:
Avoid contact with algae.
Avoid swallowing water while swimming.
Take a bath or shower with warm, soapy water after coming in contact with lake water.
Do not use lake water for cooking or bathing.



Pet Owners

Pets can be poisoned by the toxins produced by some algae.
Precautions:
Do not allow your pets to swim in or drink water where algae is present.
Rinse pets with soap and water if they swim in murky water.
Do not let your pet lick algae off their fur.



Fishing

Some toxins may accumulate in the tissues of fish.
Precautions:
Do not cut into organs when filleting your fish.
Rinse the fillets with clean water before freezing or cooking.
Avoid consuming the guts, where toxin accumulation is greatest.
Eat in moderation.



Photos courtesy of the Indiana Department of Environmental Management.

Blue-green algae and toxin levels are tested in this body of water. Alert levels vary with testing results:



LOW RISK
Don't drink the water
Shower after you swim



ADVISORY
Swimming and boating permitted.
Avoid contact with algae.
Avoid swallowing water while swimming.
Take a bath or shower with warm soapy water after coming in contact with lake water.
Do not use lake water for cooking or bathing.
Do not allow your pets to swim in or drink water where algae are present.



CAUTION
All Recreation Advisory precautions, plus . . .
Children and those with compromised immune systems should not swim.



BEACH CLOSED
Algae and toxin levels make this beach currently unsafe for swimming.

Today's Alert Level



Indiana's lakes and reservoirs provide great recreational opportunities. Learn to recognize blue-green algae, be alert, take precautions and have fun on the water!



Photos courtesy of IDEM and DNR