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Harmful Algal Blooms: Know It, Avoid It, Report It

Over the course of the summer, concerns arise about the presence and potential harm of algae blooms in our lakes. So far for the 2018 summer season, Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) have already been identified on Cayuga Lake. HABs are not specific to one water body and if you plan to be out on the water this summer there are a few things you can do before and while you are recreating on local lakes.

KNOW IT

Bodies of water that are discolored with a paint-like or filmy appearance or floating scum should always be avoided as they are potentially harmful. Images of these types of blooms as well as non-harmful blooms can be viewed at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/81962.html>.

AVOID IT

Always stay away from blooms in lakes or streams. Never swim, fish, boat, wade or eat fish caught in areas with blooms. Bloom or no bloom, never drink, prepare food, cook, or make ice with a private water supply drawn directly from a lake that is untreated or improperly treated. During a bloom, private water supplies drawn directly from the lake should not be used for showering, bathing, or washing dishes even if treatment is provided. Public water supplies that draw water from surface water are treated, disinfected and monitored. The public would be notified by the Cayuga County Health Department if public water supplies are adversely impacted by HABs.

REPORT IT

If you think that a bloom may be harmful and is present on Owasco Lake, the Cayuga County Health Department asks that you report it to the Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection Program at (315) 427-5188. If the bloom is present on another water body in Cayuga County, please report it to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) at HABsinfo@dec.ny.gov. Other lakes do not have their own watershed inspectors which is why the public should contact NYSDEC.

If you feel that you or your pets are experiencing symptoms such as diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, irritation of the skin, eyes, or respiratory system due to exposure to a harmful bloom please contact your health care provider or veterinarian.

More information regarding harmful algae blooms can be found at www.cayugacounty.us/health. Any questions or to report any symptoms you think may be related to exposure to harmful algal blooms contact the Cayuga County Health Department at (315) 253-1560.
