



Toxic algae mats

(benthic cyanobacteria)

Staying safe

Cyanobacteria can produce several toxins that can affect the liver and nervous system. People and pets can get sick after being exposed to toxins.

People

People can be exposed through ingestion, inhalation, or skin contact.

People should avoid areas of mat or scum in the water and not touch, swallow or swim in areas that may have cyanobacteria.

People who are exposed to toxins may have these common symptoms: vomiting, diarrhea, nausea, headache, rashes, sore throat, fever, numbness, tingling, salivation, difficulty speaking.

Pets

Pets can be exposed by drinking the water, licking their fur or eating clumps of algae.

Dogs should not eat mats or scum, drink water or swim in water that may have cyanobacteria.

Dogs are especially susceptible to intoxication and may have these symptoms soon after being exposed: vomiting, foaming or excessive salivation, stumbling or loss of motor control. Sudden death may also occur.

Contact a health care provider, Poison Control at 1.800.222.1222, or emergency veterinarian right away if symptoms develop.

Report exposures and illnesses to health officials

Washington

Clark County Public Health
Recreational Water Safety
dlcntyhealthwaterrec@clark.wa.gov
564.397.8428

Oregon

Oregon Health Authority
hab.health@odhsoha.oregon.gov
877.290.6767

Scan the QR code below to learn more or to report an algae mat or bloom:



clark.wa.gov/public-health/public-beaches

Updated 4.25

For other formats, contact the Clark County ADA Office: 564.397.2322 / 711 or 800.833.6388 / ADA@clark.wa.gov



What's the difference?

Algae mats vs. blooms

People recreating in water in Clark County may encounter harmful algae called cyanobacteria. Benthic algae mats are one kind of cyanobacteria that's been found in the Columbia River. Planktonic algae blooms are another type of cyanobacteria that are frequently found at Vancouver, Lacamas, and Round lakes.

While they look different, both types of cyanobacteria can be toxic to people and pets and should be avoided.

Mats (benthic)



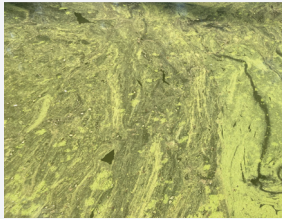
Does not affect water clarity.

Found in fast- and slow-moving water.

Can be attached to bottom or detached and floating.

Can occur anywhere in water body.

Blooms (planktonic)



Reduced water clarity as bloom gets more dense.

Typically found in ponds, lakes, and slow-moving water.

Mixed in water column; collects in scums on surface.

Accumulates at or near shoreline.

Identifying benthic algae

Benthic algae grow below the surface of the water in mats. Typically, the mats are attached to the lakebed or riverbed on sand, silt, submerged wood or plants, or stones. But the mats can detach and float on the surface of the water or wash ashore.

Shape:

- Clumps
- Blobs
- Mats
- Spires

Color:

- Bright and dark greens
- Yellow
- Brown
- Orange
- Red

Texture:

- Slimy
- Gelatinous
- Slippery

Smell:

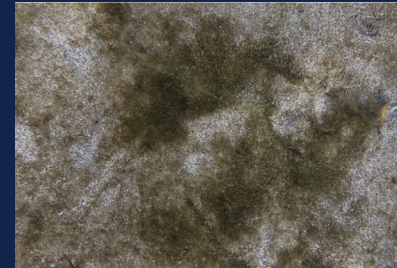
- Possible foul odor

Scan the QR code below for a visual guide for identifying benthic algae mats.



shorturl.at/cQ47L

Toxic benthic mats could look like algae shown in these images



Photos provided by Benton Franklin Health District and Clark County Public Health.