

For Immediate Release

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Public Health Advisory for Harmful Algal Bloom in Ford Lake
Residents or visitors advised to avoid touching algae or scum

YPSILANTI, Mich., Sept 14, 2018 – Washtenaw County Health Department, in consultation with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), is issuing a public health advisory for a confirmed harmful algal bloom in Ford Lake in Ypsilanti, Michigan. People and pets should avoid direct body contact with scums in the lake, water that is blue-green, or water that looks like it has a green sheen or spilled paint on its surface. People and pets should also avoid swallowing the lake water.

Recently, a resident reported a suspicious bloom to MDHHS via the MI-TOXINS and Health Hotline. Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) collected water samples. The water was analyzed and microcystin toxins were detected at elevated levels. The toxin was present near the Ford Lake boat launch when the sample was collected on September 12, 2018. A second sample was positive for the toxin at a lower concentration elsewhere in the lake. At both of these sites, visible scum was present. MDEQ will retest waters the week of September 17, 2018.

People can water ski, boat, and tube but it is advised that caution be taken in doing so in areas with visible algal scums. Breathing in water droplets with algae from the boat spray may cause nose and throat irritation. Swallowing large amounts of water containing cyanotoxins while swimming, wading, or playing in the water may cause flu-like symptoms, gastrointestinal illness, or neurotoxic symptoms. These may include abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, weakness, numbness, headaches, dizziness, or difficulty breathing. Swallowing large amounts of cyanotoxins can harm the liver or kidneys.

At this time, for your safety:

- You can swim in the water but stay away from water that has scums or mats, looks like spilled paint, or has colored streaks.
- Keep children and pets away from algae in the water or on the shore.
- Do not let pets or livestock drink the water or eat scum on the shore.
- All fish should be caught and released and not consumed. Ford Lake is under a [Do Not Eat Fish Advisory](#).
- Do not drink water from lakes, ponds, or rivers.
- Rinse people and pets off after swimming.
- When in doubt, keep people and pets out of the water.
- Call your doctor or veterinarian if you or your pet get sick after going in the water.

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Algae Blooms

Although most blooms are green algae and not harmful, there are some that are a type of cyanobacteria that have the ability to produce toxins – and can result in a harmful algal blooms (HAB). These toxins may affect the liver, nervous system and/or skin.

Washtenaw County Health Department wants residents to be aware that the potential for HABs exists on the lake. Residents should remain cautious about contacting algae or potential HABs until at least two additional samples of the lake test clear of algal toxins.

What causes HABs to form?

Factors that can contribute to HABs include: sunlight; low-water or low-flow conditions; calm water; warmer temperatures; and excess nutrients (phosphorus or nitrogen). The primary sources of nutrient pollution are runoff of fertilizers, animal manure, sewage treatment plant discharges, storm water runoff, car and power plant emissions, and failing septic tanks.

What should I do if I see a HAB?

- Do not let your children or pets play in HAB debris on the shore.
- After swimming or wading in lake water, even where no HABs are visible, rinse off with fresh water as soon as possible.
- Never swallow any lake or river water, whether you see HABs or not.
- Do not let pets lick HAB material from their fur or eat HAB material.
- Do not drink or cook with lake water.
- See a doctor if you or your children might be ill from HAB toxins. If your pet appears ill, contact your veterinarian.

More Information

The State DEQ Environmental Assistance Center number is **800-662-9278**. Information on reporting suspected algal blooms can be found on the DEQ website. For detailed information visit:

- The Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) – Associated Illness site <https://www.cdc.gov/habs/index.html>
- The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality's website https://www.michigan.gov/deq/0,4561,7-135-3313_3681_3686_3728-383630-,00.html
- The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency's website <http://epa.ohio.gov/habalgae.aspx>.

Washtenaw County Health Department

The Washtenaw County Health Department promotes health and works to prevent disease and injury in our community. Our mission is to assure, in partnership with the community, the conditions necessary for people to live healthy lives through prevention and protection programs.

Visit us at washtenaw.org/health or call 734-544-6700.

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