

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For media inquiries, contact Samantha Hillson: 607-274-6600

Health Department Update about Harmful Blue-Green Algae in Cayuga Lake

(Ithaca, N.Y., July 31, 2017) – Blue-green algae blooms, also known as HABs (Harmful Algal Blooms), have been visually identified in the southern end of Cayuga Lake. The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has confirmed blooms on each side of the lake. The Tompkins County Health Department (TCHD) and the DEC are regularly monitoring the situation. We appreciate the information and photographs reported to date by members of the public.

If you are planning to host a water event, please contact Environmental Health for guidance: 607-274-6688.

HABs: Know it. Avoid it. Report it.

Know it.

- It might be harmful blue-green algae if you see: strongly colored water, paint-like appearance, floating mats or scum.
- View these images for examples: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/81962.html>

Avoid it.

- If you're not on a public water supply, household water treatment such as Ultraviolet (UV), boiling or chlorinating will not make your water safe for use. During a bloom, do not drink, prepare food, cook, or make ice with water from the lake or from beach wells.
- Never drink untreated surface water.
- Visually monitor the water near your beach well daily and call Environmental Health with questions: 607-274-6688.
- Never swim, fish, boat, wade or eat fish caught in water with blooms.
- If you see a bloom, avoid it and wait 24 hours after the bloom is no longer visible before swimming or having contact with the water.
- Pet owners should keep their pets away from water experiencing algae blooms. If animals ingest the toxins either through drinking or cleaning their fur after exposure, they can become sick quickly. Call your veterinarian if your pet comes in contact with a bloom.

Report it.

- If you see a suspicious bloom, stay out of the water and report the bloom to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation at HABsInfo@dec.ny.gov.

What to do if contact occurs with blue-green algae:

- **Rinse thoroughly** with clean water to remove algae, including dogs that may have gone in the water.
- Stop using water and **seek medical attention immediately** if symptoms such as vomiting, nausea, diarrhea, skin, eye or throat irritation, allergic reactions or breathing difficulties occur after drinking or having contact with blooms or untreated surface water.

- Report any HAB-related health symptoms to the NYS Health Department at harmfulalgae@health.ny.gov, or call the Tompkins County Health Department at (607) 274-6604.

The Health Department is working closely with operators of bathing beaches. Beaches may be closed due to the presence of HABs. Please contact the facility operator directly for more information.

The Health Department is also working closely with public water supplies. There is no concern with public water supplies at this time.

To learn more about HABs, click here:

<https://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/water/drinking/bluegreenalgae/>

For more information about the Health Department go to <http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/health>. Also, follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/TompkinsPublicHealth/>.

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