

HEALTH OFFICIALS ISSUE BLUE-GREEN ALGAE BLOOM ALERT FOR PAHOKEE MARINA, PALM BEACH COUNTY, FL

Contact:

Communications Office
561-671-4014

chd50conactus@flhealth.gov

Pahokee, FL The Florida Department of Health in Palm Beach County has issued a Health Alert for the presence of harmful blue-green algal toxins in Lake Okeechobee near the Pahokee Marina located in the City of Pahokee, Florida. This is in response to a water sample taken on 4-26-2021. The public is encouraged to exercise caution in and around Lake Okeechobee near the Pahokee Marina located in the City of Pahokee, Florida.

Blue-green algae are a type of bacteria that occur frequently in Florida's freshwater environments. A bloom occurs when rapid growth of algae leads to an accumulation of individual cells that discolor water and often produce floating mats that emit unpleasant odors. Blooms may negatively impact fish and other aquatic animals.

Some environmental factors that contribute to blue-green algae blooms are sunny days, warm water temperatures, still water conditions and a plentiful supply of nutrients. Blooms can appear year-round but are more frequent in summer and fall. Many types of blue-green algae can produce toxins. Algal blooms can result in high toxin concentrations. Unfortunately, you cannot tell if blue-green algae are producing toxins just by looking at a bloom.

Blue-green algae blooms can impact your health. Direct contact or breathing airborne droplets (such as those created by pond/lake fountains or irrigation/sprinklers) containing high levels of algal toxins can cause irritation of the skin, eyes, nose and throat. Other symptoms include nausea and vomiting. There is not sufficient information available yet on potential long-term health impacts from exposure, but we are actively supporting research to find some of these answers. Children, the elderly, and those who are immunocompromised may be at risk even at low concentrations and should avoid any exposure.

Residents and visitors are advised to take the following precautions:

- Do not drink, swim, wade, use personal watercraft, water ski or boat in waters where there are toxic algae blooms.
- Wash your skin and clothing with soap and water if you have contact with algae or discolored or smelly water.
- Keep pets away from the area. Waters where there are algae blooms are not safe for animals. Pets and livestock should have a different source of water when algae blooms are present.
- Do not cook or clean dishes with water contaminated by algae blooms. Boiling the water will not eliminate the toxins.
- Eating fillets from healthy fish caught in freshwater lakes experiencing blooms is safe. Rinse fish fillets with tap or bottled water, throw out the guts and cook fish well.
- Do not eat shellfish in waters with algae blooms.

Find current information about Florida's water quality status and public health notifications for harmful algal blooms and beach conditions by visiting ProtectingFloridaTogether.gov. Protecting Florida Together is the state's joint effort to provide water quality information through environmental transparency and a commitment to action.

Report fish kills to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, call 1-800-636-0511.

Report symptoms from exposure to a harmful algal bloom or any aquatic toxin to the Florida Poison Information Center, call 1-800-222-1222 to speak to a poison specialist immediately.

Contact your veterinarian if you believe your pet has become ill after consuming or having contact with blue-green algae contaminated water.

If you have other health questions or concerns about blue-green algae blooms, please call the Florida Department of Health in Palm Beach County Communications Office at 561-671-4014 or see this website below for more information.

<http://www.floridahealth.gov/environmental-health/aquatic-toxins/harmful-algae-blooms/index.html>