

Do not swim in an algal bloom

Algal blooms can occur in lakes, seas and streams and can be toxic. That is why you should not bathe or swim in water where an algal bloom is occurring. The risk of poisoning is greatest among children and animals because they more easily ingest water when playing or swimming in water.

Algal blooms cloud and colour the water

Algal blooms occur when phytoplankton, often cyanobacteria, grow rapidly in a short period of time and accumulate close to the surface. Algal blooms can occur in lakes, seas and streams.

Algal blooms appear cloudy in water or consist of thick masses of algae on the surface. The water is also yellow-brown or green and the depth of visibility may decrease. Algal blooms blow onto beaches and into bays. The wind also allows the algae bloom to dilute and appear to disappear quickly, even though it remains in the water.

No swimming or bathing

Algal blooms can be toxic, but toxicity varies both within and between species. It is not possible to look at the water to see whether the algal bloom is toxic or not.

That is why we dissuade swimming or bathing in water where an algal bloom occurs. It can be hazardous, mainly for young children and pets, if they swallow water containing algal toxins.

Wait a few days until the algal bloom diminishes, because the algal toxins may remain in the water awhile after the bloom disappears.

You can be poisoned

For adults, the risk of poisoning is low. But since children, especially young ones, ingest water more easily, they are more likely to be poisoned if they bathe in an algal bloom.

The first symptoms of poisoning in humans and animals often appear a few hours later. Common symptoms are

- skin rashes and itching
- eye discomfort, such as red eyes and itching
- headaches
- tummy trouble with nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea
- fever
- muscle weakness.

If you or your child may be experiencing any of the symptoms, you should contact a healthcare provider.

It often takes larger amounts of water than a cold shower to get sick, but watch for symptoms.

You cannot purify the water by boiling

Algal toxins are not destroyed by boiling, so do not use the water for cooking. For example, do not boil potatoes in water with algal blooms.

Pets can get sick

Animals that drink water that contain algae can become seriously ill and even die from poisoning. Pets who show symptoms should therefore receive veterinary care as soon as possible.

The municipality does not check algal blooms in waters where dogs bathe. That is why it is important to always think twice as to whether it is safe for a pet to enter the water or not.

The role of the municipality

The city planning administration (Stadsbyggnadsförvaltningen) is responsible for municipal bathing and swimming areas. They advise against swimming or bathing in areas where algal blooming occurs. This advice is supported by the municipal environmental office. If you see signs of algal blooms, you can contact the environmental office.

More info

The Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management's website www.havochvatten.se provides up-to-date advice on swimming and bathing areas in the municipality.

Any questions?

You are welcome to contact us if you have any questions. More information on bathing areas and the latest results from water tests can be found here: www.havochvatten.se/hav/fiskefritid/badvatten

Contact the environmental office

Phone: 018-727 43 04,

Monday–Friday 09:00–12:00.

E-mail: miljoforvaltningen@ uppsala.se

Mailing address: Municipality of Uppsala
Environmental Office, 753 75 Uppsala,
Sweden

uppsala.se/algblomning

Examples of different stages and forms of algal blooms

