

Freshwater Harmful Algal Bloom-related Illness Tracking in California

What are freshwater harmful algal bloom (HAB)-related illnesses?

When cyanobacteria (also known as blue-green algae) and algae occur in freshwater and estuarine waterbodies at levels that pose a risk to humans, animals, and the environment, they are referred to as [freshwater harmful algal blooms \(HABs\)](#). Humans and animals can become sick after ingesting or contacting cyanobacteria, water contaminated with cyanotoxins, or algal mats. Cyanotoxins may also accumulate in fish and shellfish. Signs and symptoms may occur within minutes or days following exposure and may include:

- irritation of skin, ears, eyes, nose, or throat
- abnormal breathing (coughing, wheezing, asthma-like symptoms)
- vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain
- headaches, agitation, weakness
- seizures and death (in animals)

How can I report an illness that may be related to freshwater HABs?

Please report any suspected freshwater HAB or potential HAB-related illness by any of these methods:

- Fill out the [Online Freshwater HAB Report Form](#) including the illness information section
- Call (844) 729-6466 (toll free)
- Email CyanoHAB.Reports@waterboards.ca.gov

How can I protect myself, my family, and my pets from freshwater HAB-related illness?

- Check if a waterbody has a reported bloom on the [HAB Reports Map](#), contact the waterbody manager, and look for [posted advisory signs](#).
- Check to see if the water has [scum, has algal mats, or is discolored](#).
- Practice [Healthy Water Habits](#) at your local lake, reservoir, river, or stream.

Learn more on the [California HABs Portal](#)

(<https://mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs/>):

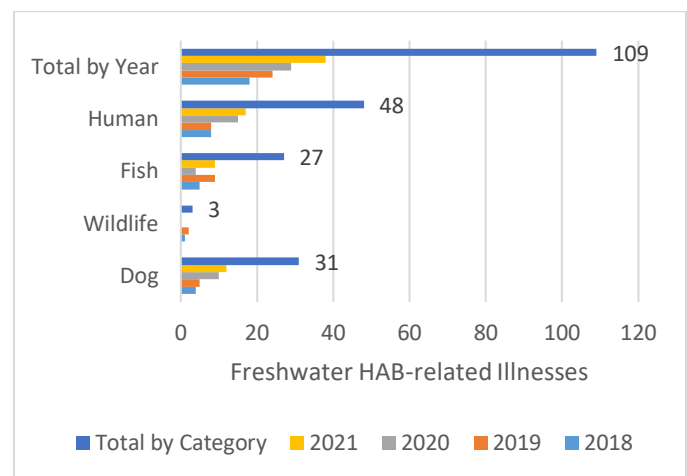
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for [HABs](#)
- [FAQs for Human Health](#) and [Resources for Medical Professionals](#)
- FAQs for [Dogs, Livestock and other Large Animals](#) and [Resources for Veterinarians](#)
- FAQs for [Fish](#) and [Wildlife](#)
- [Visual Guide Factsheet for Freshwater HABs](#)

Who is tracking HAB-related illnesses in California?

The interagency HAB-related Illness Workgroup investigates and tracks potential HAB-related illnesses in humans and animals throughout California and includes staff from the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, State Water Resources Control Board, California Department of Public Health (CDPH), and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. This workgroup also investigates and tracks [marine HAB-related illnesses](#) in California.

How many freshwater HAB-related illnesses have been reported for California?

From 2018-2021, CDPH reported 109 freshwater HAB-related human and animal illnesses from California to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [One Health Harmful Algal Bloom System \(OHABS\)](#).



In which counties did these reported freshwater HAB-related illnesses occur?

