

# Harmful Algae Blooms (HABs)

Report suspicious algae blooms to the Seneca Lake HABs Hotline!  
phone: 1-800-220-1609 or email: [senecahabs@senecalake.org](mailto:senecahabs@senecalake.org)

## What is a Harmful Algae Bloom?

Cyanobacteria, often called blue-green algae, are found in lakes, ponds, and slow-moving rivers in low numbers. When the right conditions are present (nutrients, sunlight, temperature, wind), the numbers of blue-green algae may dramatically multiply or “bloom”. Harmful Algae Blooms or HABs produce chemical toxins. If individuals or animals have been exposed to HABs and are experiencing adverse health effects, they should seek immediate medical attention.

## What do HABs look like?

HABs have different colors and looks. Some colors are green, blue-green, brown, black, white, purple, red and black. They can look like film, crust or puffballs at the surface. They also may look like grass clippings or dots in the water. Some HABs look like spilled paint, pea soup, foam, wool, streaks or green cottage cheese curd.



*green dots or globs*



*blue, green, or white spilled paint*



*parallel green streaks*



*pea soup*

## How do I know if a bloom is toxic?

Laboratory testing is the only reliable method for determining if a bloom contains toxins. Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association (SLPWA), New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) and the Finger Lakes Institute (FLI) are working together to identify suspicious blooms and obtain samples for laboratory testing.

## Are HABs an issue on Seneca Lake?

In 2015, SLPWA received 17 reports of suspicious algae blooms. In partnership with the NYS DEC, algae blooms from 5 different locations were examined in the laboratory and 3 were confirmed as HABs.

## What should I do if I see a HAB?

If you see a suspicious bloom, report it! Call the [Seneca Lake HABs Hotline 1-800-220-1609](tel:1-800-220-1609) or email us at [senecahabs@senecalake.org](mailto:senecahabs@senecalake.org).

## How dangerous are HABs?

HABs are toxic and touching, swallowing or breathing HAB-contaminated water may cause you develop a rash, stomachache or an allergic reaction. Symptoms may manifest within minutes to hours of exposure. HABs also are toxic to pets. **If you believe you, someone else, or a pet is experiencing symptoms of exposure, consult your doctor or veterinarian immediately.**

## Potential Human Health Effects

Prolonged exposure to HABs-contaminated water can result in symptoms that include:

- eye, nose, mouth, or throat irritation.
- Rashes, allergic reactions or headache.
- gastrointestinal upset - nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.
- liver damage.
- neurological reactions, such as tingling in fingers and toes.

## Potential Animal Health Effects

Pets and livestock that have come in contact with HABs-contaminated are also at risk. Symptoms of toxin exposure in animals can include:

- Vomiting or diarrhea.
- Shallow, labored breathing or seizure.

## Important Contact Information

Medical Emergency – Call 911	
New York State Department of Health District Office – Geneva	315-789-3030
Ontario County Health Dept.	585-396-4343
Seneca County Health Dept.	315-539-1925
Schuyler and Yates Counties NYS Dept. of Health in Geneva	315-789-3030
NYS Poison Control Center	800-222-1222



Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association (SLPWA) is working to **Enhance and preserve the quality of Seneca Lake.** To learn more about SLPWA's [HABs](#) and [Stream Monitoring](#) projects visit our website at [www.SenecaLake.org](http://www.SenecaLake.org).