

Freshwater Harmful Algal Bloom-Related Illness Tracking in California



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

When algae and cyanobacteria (also known as blue-green 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 \(FHABs\)](#). 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 can vary widely, may occur within minutes or days following HAB 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 (more common in animals).

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

- Submitting a [HAB-related incident report, including the illness information section](#),
- Emailing CyanoHAB.Reports@waterboards.ca.gov, or
- Calling (844) 729-6466 (toll free)

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](#), contacting the waterbody manager, and looking for [posted advisory signs](#).
- Check to see if the water is [discolored or has a scum or algal mats](#).
- Practice [healthy water habits](#) at your local lake, reservoir, river, or stream.

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

- [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](#)

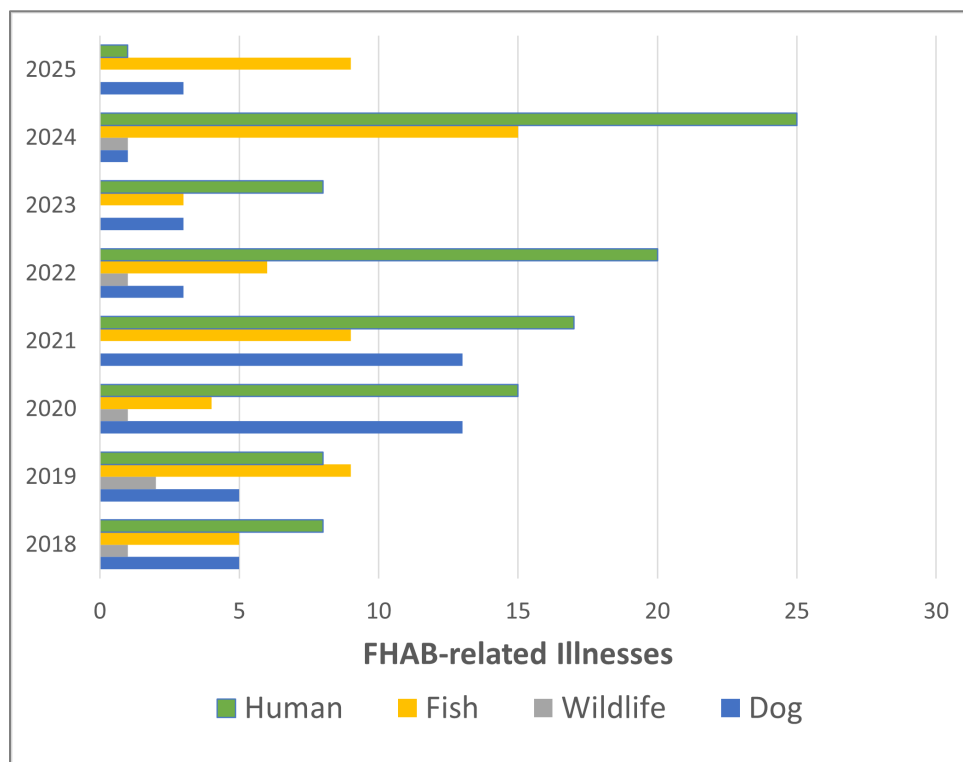
Who is tracking freshwater HAB-related illnesses in California?

Potential HAB-related illnesses in humans and animals throughout California are tracked and investigated by the Interagency HAB-related Illness Workgroup, consisting of staff from: Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHH), State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), California Department of Public Health (CDPH), and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW).



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

From 2018-2025, the workgroup reported 214 freshwater HAB-related human and animal illnesses from California to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [One Health Harmful Algal Bloom System](#).



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

