

# Causes and Symptoms of Harmful Algal Bloom-Related Illness

## Symptoms

Symptoms experienced during illness depend on the type of toxin present in the water and how a person is exposed (i.e., ingestion, skin contact, and inhalation).

Common symptoms experienced include:

- rash
- blisters
- cough
- wheezing
- congestion
- sore throat
- earache
- eye irritation
- diarrhea
- vomiting
- headache

Symptoms generally begin hours to 2 days after exposure to the toxins.

## Duration of Illness

Symptoms typically last a few days in healthy persons.

## Exposure

People can be exposed to microcystin and other cyanotoxins when surface scums or water containing high levels of toxins are:

- swallowed while drinking or recreating
- in contact with skin
- inhaled as airborne droplets while recreating or watering lawns and gardens

Although there have been no confirmed reports of cyanotoxin-related health effects due to eating fish caught during a harmful algal bloom, it is uncertain whether enough toxins in fish can be consumed to pose a health risk.