



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Public Health Advisory Issued for Austin Lake

KALAMAZOO, Mich. – The Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department, in consultation with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, is issuing a public health advisory for a suspected harmful algal bloom, or HAB, in Austin Lake, located in the City of Portage. The results of sampling performed on Tuesday, Oct. 3, 2023, came back positive for microcystin, which is a variety of cyanobacteria that can produce toxins.

These toxins can be harmful to humans and pets if they are exposed to the contaminated water, causing a range of potential health problems including skin irritation, gastrointestinal issues, and respiratory symptoms. In severe cases, these toxins can result in neurological symptoms or organ damage. In addition to avoiding swallowing the lake water, people and pets should avoid direct contact with water that appears blue-green, or water that looks like it has a green sheen or spilled paint on its surface.

The State of Michigan Bureau of Laboratories will test the positive samples from Austin Lake for confirmation and microcystin levels. Recreational activities on the lake may continue while taking the precautions noted above.

HABs most often occur during the summer months and into the fall and can last for several days or even months. Recreational water sports can worsen the impacts of HABs by creating water spray which may cause additional skin, eye, nose, or throat irritation. Swallowing large amounts of water containing cyanotoxins may cause stomach pain, vomiting, diarrhea, weakness, numbness, headaches, dizziness, or difficulty breathing. If you may have had contact with or swallowed water containing cyanotoxins, and have any of the symptoms listed above, talk to your doctor, or call Poison Control at 800-222-1222.

Do not allow your pets to come into contact with contaminated water. It is very important to rinse your pets off with fresh water after they have come into contact with a suspected HAB. Symptoms of illness from cyanotoxins often appear quicker in animals than in people—sometimes in minutes to a few hours. Symptoms in animals can include vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, staggered walking, excessive drooling, and convulsions. Deaths can also occur. Contact a veterinarian immediately if your pet has had contact with a HAB or is showing signs of illness.

To help identify a HAB and other lake conditions mistaken for HABs, visit the [HAB Picture Guide](#). For information related to eating fish in an HAB area and HAB prevention, please visit the HAB FAQ sheet located at www.michigan.gov/habs.

For further information, please contact Kalamazoo County Health & Community Service's Environmental Health Division at 269-373-5210.

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