



**ST. JOSEPH COUNTY**  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

## St. Joseph County Department of Health

*"Promoting physical and mental health and facilitating the prevention of disease, injury and disability for all St. Joseph County residents"*

### HEALTH ADVISORY: BLUE-GREEN ALGAE

The St. Joseph County Department of Health has issued a Blue-Green Algae Advisory for algal toxins in the Dixon West Place Ditch, a major tributary to the Kankakee River. This advisory is in response to water samples collected on August 26, 2023, from the City of South Bend's retention pond located on West Calvert Street. The public should exercise caution in and around Dixon West Place Ditch and the headwaters of the Kankakee River. People and animals should avoid any contact with any algae blooms, floating scum, and discolored water.

#### What are blue-green algae?

Blue-green algae are a type of bacteria common in Indiana's freshwater environments. A bloom occurs when the rapid growth of algae leads to an accumulation of individual cells that discolor water and often produce floating mats that emit unpleasant odors. Some environmental factors contributing to blue-green algae blooms are sunny days, warm water temperatures, still water conditions, and excess nutrients. Blooms can appear year-round but are more frequent in summer and fall. Many types of blue-green algae can produce toxins that can present a health hazard to humans and animals.

Exposure to blue-green algae can cause skin or eye irritation, or diarrhea and vomiting if ingested. People and animals should stay out of the water where blooms are present.

The department advises the public to take the following precautions:

- Do not drink, swim, wade, or use personal watercraft or boats in waters with a visible bloom.
- Wash your skin and clothing with soap and water if you have contact with algae or discolored or smelly water.
- Keep pets away from the area. Pets should not drink water when algae blooms are present. Waters with algae blooms are not safe for animals.
- Do not cook or clean dishes with water contaminated by algae blooms. Boiling the water will not eliminate the toxins.
- Do not eat shellfish in waters with algae blooms.
- Eating fillets from healthy fish caught in freshwater lakes and rivers experiencing blooms is safe. Rinse fish fillets with tap or bottled water, throw out the guts, and cook fish well.

Please seek medical attention should you develop symptoms that may be associated with exposure to blue-green algae blooms, such as skin or eye irritation, or diarrhea and vomiting.

Learn more about blue-green algae online at: <https://www.in.gov/idem/algae/>

Please send all electronic correspondence for the Environmental Health Unit to [envirohd@sjcindiana.com](mailto:envirohd@sjcindiana.com)



@stjosephcountyhealth



@sjchealth