

Poison Antidote

Utah Poison Control Center

Spring/Summer 2019



Beware of Harmful Algal Blooms!

Water recreation is popular in spring and summer months. But before you hit the water, be aware of the danger of harmful algal blooms (HABs). HABs are created when there is a large and fast overgrowth of cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) in water. HABs are most likely to grow under sunlight and in slow-moving water which is rich in nitrogen and phosphorus.

HABs produce toxins, so they can be dangerous. Exposure occurs when humans or animals swim in contaminated water, breath in tiny airborne droplets of mist that contain toxins, or swallow toxins present in contaminated water or food. The most common adverse effects from exposure to HABs include abdominal pain, nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, dizziness, and skin irritation. Children and pets are at a greater risk of severe symptoms because of their smaller body size and because they may swim in and swallow contaminated water.

Since it's impossible to tell if a bloom is toxic just by looking at it, the best way to stay safe from HABs is to avoid contact with floating foam layers, scums, and discolored water. Water that has an algal bloom may appear in shades of green, blue-green, yellow, brown, or red. Pay attention to public health alerts so you can avoid areas with HABs, and follow posted instructions at lakes, rivers, and other water sources.

The Utah Poison Control Center receives hundreds of calls each year on HAB exposures. If you or your animals have sudden or unexplained sickness or signs of poisoning, contact your doctor or veterinarian, or call UPCC at 1-800-222-1222. To report a suspected algal bloom, you can contact the Utah Department of Environmental Quality at 801-536-4123. For more information, visit habs.utah.gov

Sources: DEQ, CDC, EPA

Spring & Summer Food Safety

Warm weather is the perfect time for outdoor BBQs, picnics, and parties with friends and family. However, there is one guest you do not want to invite...food poisoning! Practicing food safety is key to having a poison-safe time with your loved ones. There are four core practices that will help prevent food-borne illness:

Clean:

- Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food.
- Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and countertops with hot, soapy water.
- Wash fruits and vegetables, but not meat; raw juice can splash on other surfaces, spreading more bacteria!

Separate:

- Use one cutting board for fresh produce and another one for meat, poultry, and seafood.
- When shopping for food, keep meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs separate from other foods, and bag them separately to prevent juices from dripping on other foods.
- At home, keep raw meat separate from all other foods in the fridge.

Cook:

- Cook food thoroughly. The only way to know if food has reached the correct temperature is by checking with a food thermometer.
- The safe minimum internal temperatures vary by food: 145° for seafood, beef, pork, and ham; 160° for ground meat, meat mixtures, and egg dishes; and 165° for poultry, microwaved foods, and reheated leftovers.

Chill:

- Ensure the temperature of your refrigerator is 40° F or below and your freezer is 0° F or below.
- Refrigerate or freeze perishable food within two hours of cooking or purchasing.
- Thaw food in the refrigerator, microwave, or cold water.
- Always marinate food in the refrigerator.

While food safety is important year-round, warmer weather brings some unique hazards. The "danger zone" for bacteria to grow is between 40° and 140° degrees Fahrenheit. Follow these tips when eating outdoors:

- Keep cold foods cold. Bring plenty of ice or freezer packs. Fill coolers until they are full because they can maintain a cold temperature longer than partially filled ones. Keep coolers out of the direct sun.
- While water and soap is the best option for cleaning your hands, if none are around, use hand sanitizer before and after you handle food.
- Don't let food sit out for more than two hours. If the temperature outside is 90° F or higher, don't let food sit out for more than one hour.
- Pack only the amount of food you think you'll use.
- Don't risk it. When in doubt, throw it out.
- Call the Utah Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 if you have questions about food safety or if you suspect food poisoning.

Sources: FDA, Partnership for Food Safety Education, Foodsafety.gov

