

News Release

Aug. 6, 2026

Media Contact: Kelli Hawkins

khawkins@srhd.org

(509) 324-1539, c (509) 994-8968

SRHD Issued a Harmful Algae Bloom Alert for West Medical Lake

SPOKANE, Wash. –Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD), issued a harmful algae bloom (HAB) alert for West Medical Lake after test results taken this week revealed potentially harmful toxicity levels for cyanobacteria, also known as blue-green algae.

Per Washington State Department of Health's Recreational Guidelines, SRHD strongly advises that recreation at West Medical Lake stop until further notice. There is currently no known illness among people or animals due to this HAB. Water quality monitoring and testing will continue each week to confirm a HAB is still present. Signage at the lake will be updated once toxicity levels are within acceptable limits. Testing results can be found on the [Washington State Toxic Algae website](#).

Symptoms of exposure to algal toxins vary depending on the exposure. Symptoms include rashes, hives, diarrhea, vomiting, coughing, and/or wheezing. More severe symptoms affecting the liver and nervous system may result from ingestion of water. If an individual has symptoms after a potential exposure, they should consult their health care provider. If a pet exhibits symptoms after potential exposure, the owner should consult with a veterinarian since animals are more likely to drink toxic water causing more severe reactions.

If people choose to eat fish from the lake, it is recommended that they remove all fat, skin and organs before cooking, since toxins are more likely to collect in those tissues.

The heat and lower than normal water levels in the region this summer can create an ideal environment for organisms to easily grow and multiply. There is potential risk for pathogens that cause issues such as cercarial dermatitis (also known as swimmer's itch), harmful algae blooms, or bacterial infections that can cause health problems and sickness.

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Community members are encouraged to take the following precautions when choosing a body of water for recreation:

- Pay attention to signage and do not swim in water that is under a health advisory or is listed as having a toxic algae bloom on the [Washington State Toxic Algae website](#).
- Avoid water that is stagnant, has dead fish or other aquatic animals in it, or contains large amounts of algae.
- Do not swim or play in water near sewer or other discharge pipes or in areas that are frequented by livestock or other land animals.
- Do not swim near or play in marshy areas where snails are commonly found.

After following the above precautions, it is still safest for a person to avoid getting water in their mouth and nose and to stay out of the water if they have open wounds, sores, or diarrhea. Individuals who swim or play in the water should shower with soap and water when done. If somebody suspects water contains harmful algae, they are encouraged to visit the [Washington State Toxic Algae website](#) for directions on how to report it.

“We are lucky to have so many beautiful lakes and rivers to enjoy in our area,” states John Ryskamp, SRHD environmental health specialist. “We just want to make sure that everybody is prepared to choose the safest location and avoid any risks to themselves, loved ones, and pets.”

More information on HABs can be found on SRHD’s [HAB website](#).

Spokane Regional Health District is a leader and partner in public health by protecting, improving and promoting the health and wellbeing of all people through evidence-based practices. SRHD is one of 35 local public health agencies serving Washington state’s 39 counties. Visit [srhd.org](#) for comprehensive information, updated information about SRHD and its triumphs in making Spokane a safer and healthier community. Like SRHD on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), or follow us on [X](#) to receive safety and wellness tips.

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