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## FLORIDA HEALTH REMINDS RESIDENTS AND VISITORS TO KNOW WHEN TO SWIM IT, SHORE IT OR DODGE IT



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**Panama City, Fla.**—The Florida Department of Health in Bay reminds residents and visitors to safely enjoy Florida’s waters this summer. Florida’s 9,000 miles of freshwater and salt water shoreline offer opportunities to have fun and stay cool, but it is important to know when to swim, stick to the shore or avoid naturally-occurring living organisms like mosquitoes or algae blooms.

Cyanobacteria/ blue-green algae are a group of organisms that can live in freshwater, salt water or mixed "brackish" water. When conditions are right, such as warm water and increased nutrients, these organisms can increase in numbers and accumulate in some areas of a water body. These blooms can sometimes be pushed near the shore by winds, waves, tides and currents. When this happens, people have a greater chance of contacting the blooms.

Exposure to water containing algae may cause gastrointestinal effects if swallowed and rash if touched or inhaled. Swimming in water with blue green algae blooms may cause ear, eye and skin reactions, and hay fever and flu-like symptoms (including diarrhea)—these reactions are not common. Algae blooms can also remove oxygen from the water and cause fish kills.

The department offers the following “Swim It, Shore It or Dodge It” reminders:

- **Swim It** with a buddy when safety flags and signs indicate that it is safe to do so.
- **Shore It** on the sand if you have a cut on your skin, have a weakened immune system or you are alone
- **Dodge It** avoid organisms that live in or near the water, and stay clear of algae blooms.

If you experience illness related to an algae bloom, please call the Florida Poison Control Center at 1- 800-222-1222.

For health-related questions, contact the Florida Department of Health in Bay at 850-872-4455.

To report fish kills, call Fish Kill Hotline (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission) at 800-636-0511.

To report algae blooms, contact the Florida Department of Environmental Protection at 855-305-3903.

For more information about blue-green algae and enjoying Florida's water ways safely, visit <http://www.floridahealth.gov/environmental-health/aquatic-toxins/cyanobacteria.html>

### **About the Florida Department of Health**

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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