SA harmful algal bloom

What it is

A naturally occurring, harmful algal bloom is affecting South Australia's coastline, including metro beaches, Fleurieu Peninsula, Kangaroo Island, southern Yorke Peninsula and the Coorong.

Experts believe there are three potential plausible contributing factors causing the algal bloom, which started in March 2025:

- A marine heatwave that started in September 2024 – with sea temperatures about 2.5°C warmer than usual – combined with calm conditions, light winds and small swells.
- The 2022-23 River Murray flood washing extra nutrients into the sea.
- An unprecedented cold-water upwelling in summer 2023-24 that brought nutrient-rich water to the surface.

The last notable algal bloom of this type recorded in SA was at Coffin Bay, Eyre Peninsula, in 2014.

The effects

The algal bloom does not cause long-term harmful effects in humans but has affected various marine wildlife, including fish, sharks, rays, and a wide range of invertebrates.

Exposure to discoloured or foamy water can cause short-term skin or eye irritation and respiratory symptoms, including coughing or shortness of breath.

These symptoms usually resolve within several hours of leaving the beach.

What to do

Avoid swimming in discoloured water and foam, or where marine life is dead or in poor health, and walking on beaches if experiencing symptoms.

If you are outdoors and experience irritation, go indoors, close windows and rinse exposed skin.

If symptoms are more severe or do not resolve, seek medical advice from a GP and call 000 if it is a medical emergency.

Do not touch or eat dead or dying fish, shellfish or marine wildlife. Fish caught live are safe to eat.

Dog owners should keep their pets under effective control to prevent them eating dead or dying fish, which may cause illness.

Do not let your dog swim in discoloured water and foam, or where marine life is dead or in poor health.

Report fish deaths to FISHWATCH and marine wildlife deaths to your local National Parks and Wildlife Service office.

Key contacts

Fish deaths
FISHWATCH: 1800 065 522

Public health advice
SA Health: 13 11 26

More information

Department for Environment and Water
SA harmful algal bloom update

SA Health
Water quality alerts

Primary Industries and Regions South Australia
Harmful algal bloom situation update

National Parks and Wildlife Service
Marine wildlife strandings

Government of South Australia