

# Vocabulary: Water Pollution



## Vocabulary

- Bacterial pollution – the presence of harmful bacteria in water supplies.
  - Harmful bacteria can cause sickness or infection. Boiling or filtering water can remove these bacteria and make water safe to drink.
  - Many types of bacteria are beneficial. These bacteria help clean water by breaking down pollutants and returning nutrients to the environment.
- Nutrient pollution – the presence of excess nutrients in the water.
  - Nutrient pollution usually refers to excess nitrogen and phosphorus.
  - Nutrient pollution can result in blooms of algae that die and deplete oxygen as they decay. The lack of oxygen kills fish and other animals.
  - The most common source of nutrient pollution is fertilizer. During rainstorms, excess fertilizer runs off of farms and lawns and pollutes streams and rivers. Some soaps and detergents also contain high levels of phosphorus.
- Sediment pollution – the presence of excessive sediments such as silt and clay in water.
  - Sediments can harm marine plants and animals by blocking sunlight and covering sensitive organisms. Sediment pollution can be especially devastating to coral reefs.
- Toxic pollution – the presence of toxic substances in water.
  - Examples of toxic pollutants include pesticides, oil, industrial waste, household chemicals, mining waste, lead, and radioactive nuclear waste.
  - Toxic pollution can increase rates of cancer, birth defects, and other rare diseases in affected regions.
- Water pollution – the introduction of harmful substances into water.