

# Blue-green algae

## (Cyanobacteria)

### What is blue-green algae?

- Also known as “cyanobacteria,” blue-green algae occur naturally in many Alberta lakes. Most of the year, it is present at low levels and is less of a concern. However, warm summer weather allows the organism to increase rapidly or “bloom.”

### Why should I avoid blue-green algal blooms?

- Blue-green algae can produce a toxin that may present a health risk to humans and animals.
- Contact with a blue-green algae bloom can cause eye, ear, skin irritation, rashes and allergic reactions.
- Ingesting untreated contaminated water from the lake can cause nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach cramps, and liver damage; in high concentrations, the toxin can cause severe illness and death.

### What do I do if I come in contact with a blue-green algae bloom?

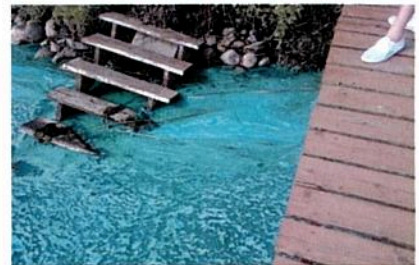
- Shower promptly with clean, treated water. If symptoms develop, call Health Link at 811.

### What does a blue-green algal bloom look like?

- Blue-green algae blooms can appear blue-green, green-brown, brown or red/pink. It may look like grass clippings, globules, fuzz balls or paint/pea soup. Decomposing blooms can appear white or purple, and smell of ammonia.
- Blue-green algae blooms are unpredictable, can develop very quickly and can move to other areas of the lake.

### How can I protect myself and others?

- Avoid swimming in water with visible blooms. Areas without visible blooms may still be used.
- Do not drink untreated lake water. Boiling the water does not remove or destroy toxins.
- Avoid contact with blue-green algae that has washed up on shorelines.
- Keep children, pets and livestock away from blue-green algal blooms.



4EPHW-12-003 | Created: July 2012 (Revised May 2015)

# HEALTH ADVISORY

## Blue-green Algae (Cyanobacteria)

**A blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) bloom and/or toxin has been identified in this lake water.**

To protect yourself and your pets, avoid contact with blue-green algae blooms; don't swim or wade in water where blue-green algae is visible; do not drink or cook with water from this lake.



If contact occurs, wash with clean water as soon as possible.

You can safely consume fish fillets from this lake. However, you should limit your consumption of whole fish and trimmings as fish may store toxins in their liver.

Pets should avoid eating whole fish and trimmings.

Persons experiencing illness after having contact with lake water are advised to call Health Link Alberta at 811.

[www.albertahealthservices.ca/eph.asp](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/eph.asp)