

For more information  
about BLUE-GREEN ALGAE, contact:

- MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT:  
Public Information Centre at 1-800-565-4923
- NORTHWESTERN HEALTH UNIT  
Kenora Office: 1-800-830-5978  
Dryden Office: 1-888-404-4231  
Fort Frances Office: 1-800-461-3348



**Northwestern  
Health Unit**

[www.nwhu.on.ca](http://www.nwhu.on.ca)

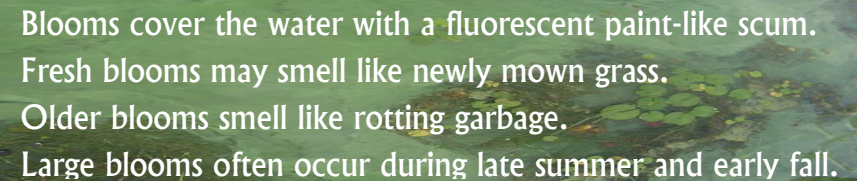
Information courtesy of the Ministry of the Environment  
and Sudbury and District Health Unit, 2009



## What you should know about **BLUE-GREEN ALGAE**

Algae blooms may be **GREEN,**  
**BLUE-GREEN, YELLOWISH BROWN,**  
**RED** or **PURPLE.**

Blue-green algae is a bacteria that may rapidly increase to form a large mass, called a bloom, during warm weather in water. It can be harmful to pets, wildlife, livestock and people.



Blooms cover the water with a fluorescent paint-like scum. Fresh blooms may smell like newly mown grass. Older blooms smell like rotting garbage. Large blooms often occur during late summer and early fall.

### **IF YOU SUSPECT A BLOOM, IT IS BEST TO BE CAUTIOUS.**

- Assume toxins are present.
- Avoid using the water.
- Call the Ministry of the Environment Spills Action Centre at 1-800-268-6060.



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## In the event of an algal bloom, reducing the health risks is easy.

- Avoid recreational activities that might put you and your family and pets in contact with algae toxins.
- Do not drink, bathe or shower in untreated water.
- Do not allow children, pets and livestock to drink or swim in the water.
- Do not use herbicides, copper sulphate or other algaecides that may break open algae cells and release toxins into the water.
- Do not boil the water or treat the water with a disinfectant like chlorine (bleach) as these treatments may release more toxins into the water.
- Do not cook with the water.
- Do not eat the liver, kidneys and other organs of fish caught in the water body. Be cautious about eating fish caught in areas with high concentrations of visible blue-green algae.
- Do not rely on home filtration systems. They do not fully protect against poisoning from toxins.
- Use alternative water sources.

## What causes blue-green algae to grow?

Blue-green algae thrive where water is shallow, slow moving and warm, but they may also be present in deeper, cooler water. Nutrients, such as phosphorus and nitrogen, increase growth.

## How can you help prevent growth of blue-green algae?

- Make sure your septic system is appropriately sized and working properly. Have it pumped regularly.
- Avoid bleaches and anti-bacterial soaps which disrupt septic system function.
- Control the amount of nutrients that enter the water. Restrict the use of nutrient-rich fertilizers on your lawn or garden.
- Control soil erosion around the lake by maintaining natural vegetation along the shoreline and keeping your property well forested.
- Use phosphate-free detergents and cleaners.
- Never use soap or shampoo in the lake itself.