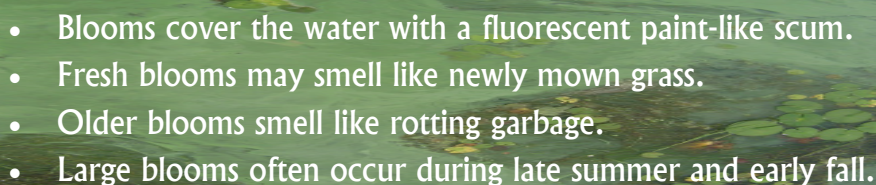




What you should know about **BLUE-GREEN ALGAE**

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.

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

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- 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 and call the Ministry of the Environment Spills Action Centre at 1-800-268-6060.

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.

For more information, contact:

- Ministry of the Environment:
Public Information Centre at 1-800-565-4923
- Northwestern Health Unit at 1-800-830-5978

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.



**Northwestern
Health Unit**
www.nwhu.on.ca