

MEDIA RELEASE



Northwestern
Health Unit

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For immediate release

Blue Green Algae

There have been reports of algae blooms in the Larson Bay and Maple Road areas of Wabigoon Lake in Dryden. The blooms are being tested to see if they are blue-green algae. At this time the results are not known, so the Northwestern Health Unit is asking people to be cautious and treat it as though it is blue-green algae.

Blue-green algae, or cyanobacteria, are microscopic organisms that are naturally present in lakes and streams. They are usually present in low numbers but can rapidly increase in warm, shallow, undisturbed surface water that gets a lot of sun. When this happens, they can form blooms that discolor the water or produce floating scum on the surface of the water. Blooms often make the water look blue-green or olive-green, or like green pea soup or turquoise paint.

Some blue-green algae produce toxins and can pose a health risk to people and animals when they are exposed to them in large amounts. Your health may be impacted when surface scum or water containing high levels of blue-green algal toxins are swallowed, come into contact with the skin, or when airborne drops containing toxins are inhaled while swimming, bathing or showering.

With the water in the region warming there is an increased risk of blue green algae blooms. If you suspect a blue-green algal bloom, be cautious and assume that toxins are present. Do not drink the water and avoid swimming or household use.

People and pets should avoid contact with water that is discolored or has scum on the surface. If contact does occur, wash with soap and water or rinse thoroughly with clean water to remove algae. Water not visibly affected by a blue-green algae bloom is rarely causes health effects for swimming and household contact, such as bathing or showering but some people may be sensitive.

If you spot a bloom, report it to the Spills Action Centre at 1-800-268-6060

For more information on blue-green algal blooms online follow the links below:
[Information about Blue-Green Algae – Ministry of Environment](#)

If you have questions please contact the Northwestern Health Unit 807-468-3147 to speak with a public health inspector.

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