

# Information on Blue Green Algal Blooms

## Preparing for Algal Blooms - What You Should Know

Blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) are a type of algae that can produce toxins that can be harmful to people, pets and livestock. Algal blooms, or the overgrowth of algae, can occur in Manitoba lakes and other surface waters. Warm and calm weather combined with high levels of nutrients (phosphorus and nitrogen) during the summer months can create ideal conditions for algal bloom development.

Algal blooms will form floating clumps or scums, sometimes making the water look like thick pea soup or paint, and may emit a strong, unpleasant odour. However, not all algal blooms produce toxins, and there is no visual way to detect if toxins are present in the water.

Home and cottage owners who use lake water as a source of drinking water should be aware that most small treatment systems are unable to remove algal toxins. Boiling or adding chlorine to the water will not remove the algal toxins.

Symptoms of algal toxin poisoning may include: stomach upset, vomiting, headache, diarrhea, muscle twitching, convulsions, or paralysis. Skin contact with some types of algae can cause skin and eye irritation. Algal toxin poisoning has resulted in animal deaths in Manitoba.

## What You Can Do

**If you have an infant:** As a precaution, avoid using water from small private surface water systems to prepare infant formula during the summer months. Infant formula should be prepared using a safe alternate drinking water source (such as bottled water).

**Watch your lake for algal blooms. If you observe an algal bloom, take the following precautionary measures:**

- Avoid drinking, swimming or bathing in water with algal blooms.
- If an algal bloom is observed on the lake that supplies your small water system, use an alternate water source (such as bottled water) for drinking, food preparation, bathing, other personal hygiene and pets.
- If you are visiting a beach, avoid swimming or bathing in water if you see an algal bloom. Manitoba routinely monitors public beaches for algal blooms and posts beach advisories when concentrations pose a health risk.
- Keep pets and livestock out of the water if you see an algal bloom.
- Algal toxins can accumulate in fish, particularly in the internal organs, like the liver and kidneys. Avoid consuming the internal organs of fish and avoid consuming fish that appear unhealthy in waters experiencing algal blooms.
- Notify your neighbours and report the algal bloom at [www.manitoba.ca/beaches](http://www.manitoba.ca/beaches) or **204-945-0002**.

## For More Information

For more information on beach conditions and algae, please contact the Water Science and Watershed Management Branch at 204-945-0002 or visit the website at [www.manitoba.ca/beaches](http://www.manitoba.ca/beaches).

For more information on algae toxins in drinking water, please contact the Office of Drinking Water at **204-945-5762**.

If you experience symptoms that may be related to algae toxins, see your health care provider. For more information on the health effects of algal toxins, contact Health Links/Info Santé at **204-788-8200 (toll free at 1-888-315-9257)**.