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July 2021

RE: Information for water users on algal blooms

To whom it may concern,

Blue-green algal blooms can produce toxins that are harmful to people, pets and livestock. Algal blooms are difficult to predict and may form and then disperse quickly, or last for several days or weeks. Warm and calm weather coupled with relatively high nutrient loads provide ideal conditions for blue-green algae to develop during the summer months.

A poster (below) and fact sheet (below) have been developed to provide information for residents, cottagers and the public on algal blooms and precautions to take when blue-green algal blooms are observed. Please make this fact sheet available in your community and place the poster in relevant public locations, including any publically accessible facilities near water and near beaches. It is recommended that the information be made available throughout the algal bloom season, which is typically between June and late September.

Residents or cottagers using lake water to supply their homes should be advised that most small water systems cannot remove algal toxins. Notifying owners of these water systems is very important so that they can be prepared to take precautions. Please contact the Office of Drinking Water at 204-945-5762, if you have any drinking water questions or concerns. Information on drinking water safety, water treatment devices and other drinking water fact sheets are available at manitoba.ca/drinkingwater.

Manitoba Agriculture and Resource Development routinely monitors water quality at a number of beaches across Manitoba. For posters or fact sheets or for information on recent algal bloom conditions, beach monitoring or to report a bloom, please go to Manitoba.ca/beaches.

For more information on the health effects of blue-green algal toxins, contact Health Links/Info Santé at 204-788-8200 (toll free at 1-888-315-9257).

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Siobhan Burland Ross
A/Director
Office of Drinking Water
Manitoba Conservation and Climate

Original signed by

Nicole Armstrong
Director
Water Branch
Manitoba Agriculture and
Resource Development

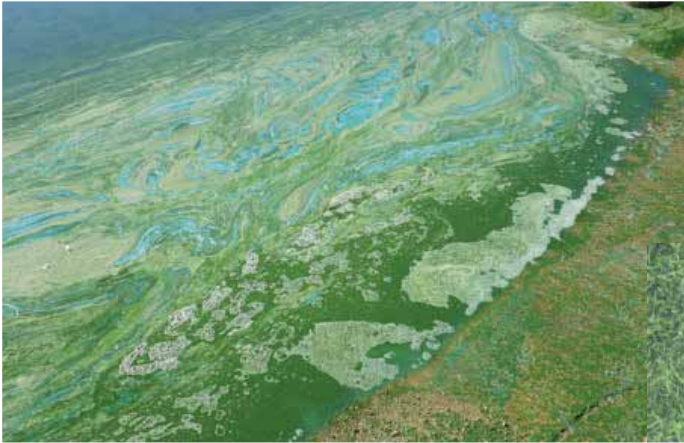
Original signed by

Dr. Susan Roberecki
Medical Officer of Health –
Environmental Health
Public Health Branch
Manitoba Health and Seniors
Care

Enc. (2)

Blue-green Algal Bloom

Precautions



Blue-green algal blooms can produce toxins that are harmful to people, pets and livestock.



Algal blooms will form floating clumps or scums, sometimes making the water look like thick pea soup or paint, and may have a strong, unpleasant odour.

It's impossible to know if toxins are present in the water without testing.

Please take the following precautions to reduce exposure to algal blooms and their toxins:

- Don't use water from small, private surface water systems (ex: cottage with a water intake from the lake) to make infant formula during the summer months. Use a safe alternative, such as bottled water.
- When algal blooms are present:
 - Avoid swimming or other contact with the water.
 - Don't use water from small, private surface water systems to drink, prepare food, and make ice or for showering, bathing and other personal hygiene needs.
 - Keep pets and livestock out of the water.
 - Avoid consuming the internal organs of fish or fish that appear unhealthy.

Symptoms of algal toxin exposure may include: nausea, vomiting, headache, diarrhea, skin/eye irritation, fever, muscle or joint pain, respiratory symptoms, allergic reactions, and occasionally other more severe health effects.

If you have symptoms that may be related to algal toxins, see your health care provider. Contact **Health Links – Info Santé** at **204-788-8200** (toll free at **1-888-315-9257**) if you are concerned about health effects.

For more information on algal blooms, current beach conditions and advisories, or to report an algal bloom: visit manitoba.ca/beaches or call **204-945-0002**.

For more information on algal toxins in drinking water, visit manitoba.ca/drinkingwater.

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 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 residential treatment systems are unable to remove algal toxins. Boiling or adding chlorine to the water will not remove the algal toxins.

Exposure to Algal Toxins

You can be exposed to algal toxins by drinking or swallowing water, inhaling air borne water droplets or mist, skin contact, or potentially by consuming fish. Although information is very limited for fresh water fish, algal toxins may accumulate, particularly in the internal organs, like the liver and kidneys.

What are the Symptoms of Algal Toxin Exposure?

Symptoms of algal toxin exposure may include: nausea, vomiting, headache, diarrhea, skin/eye irritation, fever, muscle and joint pain, respiratory symptoms, allergic reactions and occasionally other more severe health effects. Algal toxin exposure has resulted in animal deaths in Manitoba.

If you experience symptoms that may be related to algal toxins, please see your health care provider. Contact Health Links – Info Santé at 204-788-8200 (toll free at 1-888-315-9257) if you are concerned about health effects.

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.
- 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 manitoba.ca/beaches or 204-945-0002.

For More Information

For more information on beach conditions and algal blooms, please contact the Water Branch at 204-945-0002 or visit the website at manitoba.ca/beaches.

For more information on algal toxins in drinking water, please contact the Office of Drinking Water at 204-945-5762 or visit the website at manitoba.ca/drinkingwater.

For information on your municipal drinking water system, contact your water supplier.