

## Contact Information

***If you think you are experiencing symptoms related to exposure or ingestion of blue-green algae, contact your doctor or the Poison Information Hotline at 1-800-222-1222.***

***If your pet displays symptoms such as seizures, vomiting, or diarrhea after contact with the water, contact your local veterinarian.***

***For more information about contacting your local health department, check the Department of Health & Family Services website:***

*[http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/dph\\_ops/LocalHealth/](http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/dph_ops/LocalHealth/)*



## State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Watershed Bureau  
101 S. Webster St.  
Box 7921  
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7921

**Telephone 608-267-7694  
FAX 608-267-7664**

**TTY Access via relay – 711**

**<http://dnr.wi.gov>**

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides equal opportunity in its employment programs, services, and functions under an Affirmative Action Plan. If you have any questions, please write to the Equal Opportunity Office, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C., 20240.

This publication is available in alternative format (large print, Braille, audio tape, etc.) upon request. Please call (608) 264-6127 for more information.

PUB-WT-803 6/04



## Blue-Green Algae



**GET THE FACTS  
ABOUT BLOOMS OF  
BLUE-GREEN ALGAE  
AND CONTINUE TO ENJOY  
WISCONSIN WATERS**

**Wisconsin Department of  
Natural Resources**



Blue-green algae can form "blooms" in lakes, ponds, or rivers.

## What are Blue-Green Algae?

Blue-green algae (or cyanobacteria) are common, native algal species found in rivers, lakes, and ponds throughout Wisconsin. These algae can form large "blooms" due to high nutrient levels, (e.g. phosphorous) or when environmental conditions are favorable. These blooms may appear as scum layers or large floating mats and often have a bluish-green color and an unpleasant odor.

Some species of blue-green algae naturally produce toxic substances. Humans and animals may experience illness or other health effects if there is skin contact with algal toxins or if large quantities of the algae are ingested while toxins are being produced. Scientists who study water quality do not have any sampling tools to accurately predict when algal toxins may be present. Due to this uncertainty, common sense is necessary if algal blooms are present.

## Symptoms of Contact with Blue-Green Algae

**Swimming** in water with an algal bloom may cause symptoms such as:

- skin rash
- hives
- runny nose
- irritated eyes
- throat irritation

**Swallowing or ingesting** water with an algal bloom may cause symptoms such as:

- vomiting, diarrhea, or nausea
- headache, throat irritation, or muscle and joint pain
- in severe cases, paralysis, respiratory failure, or death
- seizures or convulsions in your pets



Do not allow pets to drink or swim in algal blooms.

## Preventing Exposure to Algal Toxins

- Use common sense to ensure the safety of yourself and your family.
- Avoid contact with scum layers, large mats, or other visible blooms of blue-green algae.
- DO NOT allow pets or children to play in shallow, scummy areas or areas where blooms of algae are present.
- Avoid jet-skiing, windsurfing or water-skiing over mats of algae.
- Do not use raw, untreated water for drinking, cleaning food or washing camping gear.
- Do not attempt to boil contaminated water as this may release more toxins from the algae.
- If you come in contact with a bloom, wash off thoroughly, paying special attention to the swimsuit area.
- If your pet comes in contact with a bloom, wash off your pet's coat to prevent it from ingesting the algae while self-cleaning.