

Cyanobacteria (Blue-Green Algae) Blooms

Algae are a natural part of the aquatic ecosystems of lakes in Interior Health Region. Prolific growth can cause an algae bloom to form. Cyanobacteria or blue-green algae can produce several types of toxins that can be poisonous to people, pets or livestock. Cyanobacteria blooms often cause the water to look bad and may also smell bad. You can be exposed to cyanobacteria toxins by drinking water that contains a bloom, or by getting it on your skin during recreational activities. Always use caution when there is a bloom.

Monitoring

The public can submit an algae bloom observation online with the Province of BC [Algae Watch](#). In partnership with local governments algae blooms may be monitored and tested. Interior Health recommends that beach operators have a [Beach Safety Plan](#) in place, so they can respond quickly to extreme weather events and other problems.

Sampling

Interior Health does not routinely test water of algae blooms to determine the algae species or presence of toxins. Algae blooms are variable and conditions can change. Testing represents only where the sample was taken and what was contained in the sample. Test results only represent that particular water sample and that time. There may be toxins present in other locations of the bloom not tested, or toxins may be produced at a later time. The amount can vary dramatically within the body of water and over time. If there is a bloom always use caution.

Advisories

Find [Beach Water Advisory for Algae](#)

If you see a bloom it is best to avoid any direct contact with the bloom. If contact is made, rinse your body with clean water. Recreational activities, such as swimming, are discouraged. Consider using an alternate source for drinking water, if your source of water intake is in the body of water with the bloom. Boiling the water will not remove any toxins. Contact your water supplier for more information. Consider providing pets and livestock with an alternative source of drinking water.

Level of notification of Algae blooms

Cautionary: Algae present; no testing conducted or testing has NOT identified toxins:

- Avoid any contact with water/recreational use is not advisable
- Consider an alternative drinking water source(s)

Do Not Consume/ Beach Closure: Testing identified toxins

- Beaches are closed: Stay Out of the water,
- Do NOT consume the water: use an alternative drinking water source.

Resources

- [HealthlinkBC Cyanobacteria Blooms](#)
- [Province of BC Algae Watch](#)
- [Drinking Water Advisories](#)
- [Interior Health Beach Advisories](#)
- [Creating a Beach Safety Plan](#)