

Toxic Algae

WHAT IS TOXIC ALGAE OR BLUE-GREEN ALGAE?

- * Toxic Algae has been found in a number of Nebraska lakes this spring and summer.
- * Toxic algae thrives in stagnant water during warm weather with drought or near drought conditions.

WHAT SHOULD I LOOK FOR TO AVOID TOXIC ALGAE?

- * Water that has neon green, pea green, blue-green or reddish-brown color
- * Water that has a bad odor
- * Foam, scum, or a thick mat on the water surface
- * Green or blue-green streaks on the surface, or accumulations in bays and along shorelines where pets and toddlers have easy access and the water is shallow and more stagnant.

IS IT SAFE TO EAT FISH FROM LAKES THAT ARE KNOWN TO CONTAIN HIGH LEVELS OF TOXIC ALGAE?

- * The toxins have been found in the liver, intestines, and pancreas of fish. Due to potential for accumulation of these toxins in fish, it is recommended that anglers consider practicing catch and release.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS INVOLVED WITH THESE TYPES OF TOXINS?

- * Pets and farm animals have died from drinking water containing toxic algae.
- * Toxic algae poisons have been known to last in water for as long as two weeks after the bloom has disappeared.
- * While the risk to humans is mostly skin rashes and blisters, there have been instances of diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, as well as liver disease.
- * Other external symptoms include: mouth ulcers, ulcers inside of the nose, eye and/or ear irritations, blistering of the lips, sore throat (symptoms increase significantly with the duration of water contact and the density of the lake).
- * Other symptoms from ingestion include: headaches, muscle pains, central abdominal pain, seizures, liver failure, respiratory arrest and death (severity of the illness is related to the amount of water and toxins ingested).
- * The poison can be fatal

WHAT YOU CAN DO & WHAT TO AVOID

- * Be aware of areas with visible algae and keep animals and children away from water.
- * Don't wade or swim in water containing visible algae, avoid direct contact with dense mats of algae.
- * Don't drink water or let children, livestock or pets get into the water. Remember

boiling the water does NOT make it safe to drink.

- * Make sure children are supervised at all times when they are near water.

Drowning, not exposure to algae, remains the greatest hazard of water recreation.

- * If you do come in contact with the algae or the water around algae blooms, rinse off with fresh water as soon as possible.

- * If you are wading in knee deep water and can't see your feet, get out of the water immediately and wash well.

- * Don't boat or water ski through algae blooms.

- * Remember, drinking water containing toxic algae can be potentially fatal, so avoid any situation that could lead to swallowing contaminated water.

IF I THINK MY LAKE IS AFFECTED, WHO DO I CALL?

If you believe that your lake is affected, please contact the: Department of Environmental Quality's Surface Water Section at: (402) 471-0096

CAN I TAKE SAMPLES AND FIND OUT RESULTS?

As part of the University of Nebraska Water Quality Extension Program, UN-L has developed a Volunteer Monitoring Program. Lake test kits are included in the sample collection process for those that involve lake users, owners etc. To obtain more information and a test kit please contact:

Southeast District Health Department

877-777-0424