

What Can I do...

...to protect myself and my family from harmful algae blooms?

- Do not swim in or swallow water containing algae scums/blooms
- Do not boat, water ski, jet ski, etc. over affected water (inhaling blue-green algae through water spray is the most toxic route of exposure)
- Do not let children play with scum layers, even from shore
- Wash and dry any clothing and equipment
- Do not let pets swim in, or drink, waters experiencing blooms
- Immediately rinse off pets with clean water after contact with surface water before they get a chance to groom and ingest toxins that may have collected in their fur
- Do not treat surface waters with chemicals, including herbicides or algacides
- Always take a shower after coming into contact with any surface water (whether or not a blue-green algae bloom is present)

...to reduce the frequency of future blue-green algae blooms?

- Minimize activities that cause erosion
- Use lawn fertilizers only when truly needed
- Prevent yard debris from washing into storm drains and the lake
- Support local ordinances and laws that require erosion control measures for residential and commercial construction sites
- Plant and maintain vegetative buffer strips along your shoreline and streams (native plants are many times more effective at filtering nutrients and slowing erosion than grass species found on residential lawns)

Whom to Contact?

To Report a Blue Green Algae Bloom:

During business hours - M-F 8-4:

Livingston County Department of Environmental Health: **585-243-7280**

Weekends, Evenings and Holidays:

Livingston County Sheriff's Office: **585-243-7100**

If you or someone you know may have been exposed to blue-green algae toxins:

Contact your physician or call the

Poison Control Center: 1-800-222-1222

For pets: Contact your veterinarian

For more information on blue-green algae and Conesus Lake visit:

<http://livingstoncounty.us/planning.htm>

Questions and concerns about blue-green algae may be directed to:

Conesus Lake Watershed Inspector

Livingston County Department of Environmental Health: **585-243-7280**

Conesus Lake Watershed Manager

Livingston County Planning Department: **585-243-7550**



CONESUS LAKE WATERSHED COUNCIL

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BLUE-GREEN ALGAE



(Credit: Dr. Jennifer Graham, USGS – Blue-Green Algae)

What is Blue - Green Algae?

Blue-green algae, or cyanobacteria, are a group of photosynthetic bacteria that can release harmful toxins and skin irritants. Naturally present in very low concentrations in lakes and streams, a combination of key environmental factors and weather conditions can favor blue-green algae growth and form blooms and surface scums where toxins may become concentrated enough to become a health threat.

Identification

Blue-green algae cells can form into blooms and surface scums. Cyanobacteria are most often blue-green in color, but can also be green, blue, reddish-purple, or even brown. Blooms can take on the appearance of “pea soup,” green or blue paint, or form puffy clumps that float on the surface. Blue-green algae is often confused with filamentous algae which can also collect on the surface. If the bloom in question has a hair-like or stringy appearance, it is likely filamentous algae, which is non-toxic.

Concerns Associated with Blue Green Algae

Blue-green algae toxins have the potential to cause illness in humans and animals. You can become exposed to toxins through swimming, inhaling water spray (e.g., when boating or water skiing), or by swallowing contaminated water. Blooms can also have a negative impact on the Lake by discoloring water and producing foul odors that result from the decomposition of blue-green algae cells.

Blue Green Algae Exposure Symptoms

Humans:

Rashes and blisters • Fever • Headache • Eye/nose/throat irritation • Muscle pain and weakness • Difficulty breathing • Vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal pain • Dry cough

Pets (following contact with surface water):

Vomiting • Diarrhea • Lethargy • Loss of appetite

Blue Green Algae “Perfect Storm” Conditions

- Eutrophic or nutrient rich water bodies like Conesus Lake
- Heavy Spring rain events flushing increased levels of nutrients into the Lake
- Warm water temperatures (late Summer)
- Ample sunlight (long stretch of sunny days)
- Sudden weather changes from stormy to calm causing blue-green algae cells to rise to the surface of the Lake
- Shallow, sheltered water such as coves and lee shores

Frequently Asked Questions

Are fish caught in the lake during a blue-green algal bloom safe to eat?

The World Health Organization (WHO) advises that fish taken from water where a blue-green algae bloom is present are safe to eat in moderation. That said, you should avoid eating the guts of the fish, which may contain high toxin levels.

Should I treat my waterfront with chemicals to get rid of the algae?

No. Treating blue-green algae with chemicals can cause the cells to break down and release toxins. While the bloom may no longer be visible, blue-green algae toxins may still be present in the water for a few days. It is best to wait for the bloom to go away on its own.

If there is a bloom in one portion of the lake, can I swim in water elsewhere?

Yes. Blue-green algae blooms are often very localized. Recreational activities and water use are usually advised against only where the bloom is occurring.

Should I let my pets drink or swim in water containing algal blooms?

No. Pets that ingest water containing blue-green algae can become severely ill or even die. Never allow pets to drink raw, untreated lake water.

There was just an algae bloom but now it is gone. Is it safe to use the water?

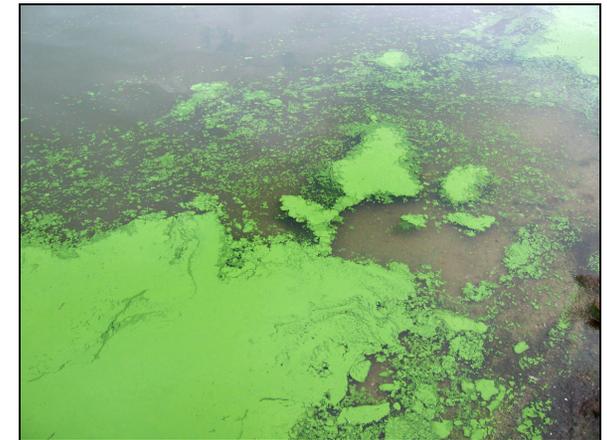
Yes. The wind can quickly mix blue-green algae blooms on the surface back into the water below. Once remixed, the water is safe.

Will boiling affected lake water make it safe for washing or consumption?

No. Blue-green algae toxins are very heat stable; boiling will not remove the toxins.

My skin was red and itchy after swimming in clear water. Does this mean there’s a blue-green algae bloom that I can’t see?

No. The lake is a living water body and all sorts of organisms make it their home, some of which may cause mild skin irritation. It is a good practice to always rinse off after swimming, even if the water is clear.



(Credit: Dr. Jennifer Graham, USGS – Blue-Green Algae)

What is Livingston County doing to address this threat?

- Providing the public with information on how to identify blue-green algae, avoid contaminated water and recognize symptoms if you or your family have come in contact with the toxins
- Monitoring algae blooms for known toxins
- Alerting the public about potential algae threats
- Long-term identification and reduction of nutrient inputs via implementation of the Conesus Lake Watershed Management Plan