

# NEWS RELEASE

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## BLUE-GREEN ALGAE IN BERNARD LAKE

The Health Unit advises that there is a bloom of blue-green algae in Bernard Lake in the Township of Strong. The geographic location of the sample is 45.760068, -79.396497.

Residents and visitors near these areas need to take the following safety measures:

- If you use a private water system, do not use water from the lake for drinking, cooking and bathing. Boiling the water or using home water treatment devices **will NOT** destroy the toxins.
- Do not swim or do other water activities that could increase the risk of getting the toxins on your skin or in your mouth.
- Some toxins build up in the tissues of fish and shellfish, particularly in the guts and other organs. We do not know if the toxins in fish are a concern. It depends on how much you eat and how severe the bloom is. Be careful if you eat fish caught in water where blooms occur. Do not eat the liver, kidneys and other organs of fish caught. Do not cut the organs when filleting.

These safety measures are effective immediately. While the blue-green algae bloom may not show the presence of toxins, there is always the risk that toxins could be produced. These toxins may stay in the water for up to three weeks after the algae bloom is gone.

Even when a bloom has disappeared, toxins can persist in the water for a long time. For this reason, the Health Unit and the District Office of the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change cannot confirm when the water is safe to use for private water systems.

You can find out more about blue-green algae at [myhealthunit.ca](http://myhealthunit.ca) or call the Health Unit at 705-474-1400, ext. 2400 or 1-800-563-2808.

## Quick Facts

- Cyanobacteria, also called blue-green algae or 'pond scum', are not really algae, but tiny bacteria.
- Although usually hard to see, during hot weather they can grow rapidly to form a large mass, called a bloom. Blooms continually change and are difficult to predict. Wind, temperature or sunlight could change where the bloom is located in the water.
- Even when a bloom has disappeared, toxins can persist in water bodies for a long time. Toxins can irritate the skin and, if ingested, cause diarrhea and vomiting. At high enough levels, the toxins may cause liver and nervous system damage.
- If skin contact does occur, wash with soap and water or rinse thoroughly with clean water to remove algae.

- 30 -

## Media Inquiries Only

Jolinne Kearns, Public Relations Specialist

P: 705-474-1400, ext. 2221 or 1-800-563-2808

E: [Communications@healthunit.ca](mailto:Communications@healthunit.ca)