



If You See Something Say Something...Reporting blooms

Algae blooms are a normal part of lake ecology. If you observe a bloom please report it to the Board of Health at boh@ashfield.org or a Park Commissioner at park@ashfield.org

What is blue-green algae?

Though often referred to as algae, blue-green algae are not algae at all, they are types of bacteria called cyanobacteria due to their color. They are normally present in bodies of water. This type of bacteria thrives in warm, nutrient-rich water. When conditions are right, the blue-green algae can grow quickly forming "blooms." Certain varieties of blue-green algae can produce toxins linked to illness in humans and animals.

When do harmful algal blooms occur?

Blue-green algae prefer warm, calm, sunny weather & water temps higher than 75°F. Blooms usually occur during summer & early fall, and other times of the year, if conditions are right.

What are the possible health effects?

You can become sick if you swallow, have skin contact, or breathe in airborne water droplets if the water has harmful algal toxins. If you become sick, you might experience vomiting, diarrhea, rash, eye irritation, cough, sore throat, and headache. Symptoms generally begin hours to two days after exposure. Children will generally be more affected than adults.

Can animals be affected?

Dogs are highly susceptible to harmful algae because they are small and tend to swallow water while swimming and/or licking their coats and don't let them swim or drink where there is a noticeable algae or scum on the shore. If they do, rinse them off with fresh water immediately and don't let them lick their fur. Animals can experience symptoms within minutes of exposure. Symptoms may include, vomiting, diarrhea, weakness, difficulty breathing, and seizures. In the worst cases, animals have died. If your pet experiences these symptoms after exposure to algae, contact your veterinarian immediately.

For more information on blooms click here: <https://www.mass.gov/lists/algae-information>

What should I do if I see a bloom? Report it to the Board of Health or the Park Commission, see emails above. Use common sense when dealing with algae. It is impossible to tell from a visual inspection whether an algal bloom is toxic. The safest thing to do is to treat every algal bloom as if it could be dangerous. Do not swim or wade through algal scum. Do not boat, water ski, or jet ski through algal blooms. Do not fish in lakes where algal scum is present. Always shower off with soap and water after swimming in a lake. Do not let dogs drink lake water during an algal bloom. Do not let dogs eat algal scum, or lick it off their fur. Wash your dog off with clean water immediately if your dog swims or wades in water during an algal bloom.