

Lakes in Alberta

Currently in Alberta, there are over 25 lakes with blue green algae health advisories. Alberta Health Services keeps a listing of lakes with advisories here:

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/news/bga.aspx>.

With continued unseasonably warm sunny weather, paired with crystal clear water, we can also anticipate accelerated nuisance plant growth in Summerside Lake. Nuisance plant growth can include emergent plants, submersed aquatics and filamentous plants such as blue green algae. Some forms of blue green algae can produce liver and neurological toxins. While rarely fatal, we must be vigilant and heed warnings from Alberta Health Services and other agencies and protect ourselves and our pets.

What are Blue Green Algae?

Blue green algae are a nuisance algae that can outcompete the more desirable, healthy green algae in lakes, of which the latter are less prone to blooming and do not produce toxins.

Can Blue Green Algae Effect Health?

Some bloom-forming cyanobacteria can produce toxins that, if contacted, may cause skin and eye irritation, or can result in intestinal discomfort, or severe illness in humans if ingested.

Consumption of sufficient quantities of cyanobacterial toxins can lead to death in livestock, pets, or wildlife. When blue-green algal blooms decompose they can cause a sewage-like odour that may be offensive to recreational users.

What's Being Done at Lake Summerside?

We are working in partnership with Alberta Health Services to monitor conditions in Summerside Lake to ensure public safety. This includes recommended weekly water testing. The summer of 2020 was the very first-time small amounts of blue green algae were observed at Lake Summerside. In mid-July 2021 some undesirable algae were spotted around the lake in very small patches, and Alberta Health Services was notified for future sampling. We are experiencing similar small patches again this year. Over the short-term, in-lake treatment with Peroxide will commence in the coming week (weather permitting). Peroxide is an excellent algaecide that targets harmful cyanobacteria with no other aquatic effects, and degrades into oxygen and water. In the longer- term, our biologists are working to control phosphorus release from the sediments which will curb nuisance plant growth across the lake.

What Should I Do?

While Alberta Health Services recommends avoiding direct contact with any visible blooms, other non-blooming areas of lakes can still be used for recreation.

Though there is currently no blue green algae advisory for Lake Summerside, the following information can still be used as a guideline for lake user safety.

If there is a blue green algae advisory for a body of water you plan on visiting, take these precautions:

- **Avoid all contact** with blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) blooms. Look for a part of the lake that does not have a scum layer on top, is not colored a significant green or blueish color, and has no significant particles or globs. As you wade out, ensure the area is visually clear to the bottom of the lake (seeing your toes at 1 meter is a reasonable indicator) If contact occurs, wash with tap water as soon as possible.

- **Do not swim or wade** (or allow your pets to swim or wade) in any areas where blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) is visible.
- **Do not** feed whole fish or fish trimmings from lakes with blue green algae to your pets.
- Consider limiting human consumption of *whole fish* and *fish trimmings* from lakes with blue green algae, as it is known that fish may store toxins in their liver. (People can safely consume *fish fillets* from this lake).

Blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) is naturally occurring, and often become visible when weather conditions are calm. Appearing like scum, grass clippings, fuzz or globs on the surface of water, blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) can be blue-green, greenish-brown, brown, and/or pinkish-red, and often smell musty or grassy.

Advisories are in effect until rescind notices are issued.

People who come in contact with visible blue-green algae (cyanobacteria), or who ingest water containing blue-green algae (cyanobacteria), may experience skin irritation, rash, sore throat, sore red eyes, swollen lips, fever, nausea and vomiting and/or diarrhea. Symptoms usually appear within one to three hours and resolve in one to two days. Symptoms in children are often more pronounced; however, all humans are at risk of these symptoms.

If you suspect a problem related to blue-green algae, or if you require further information on blue-green algae, please call Health Link at [811](tel:811).

What does Blue Green Algae Look Like?

Photo examples, and more information of blue green algae can be found here:

[BGA Frequently Asked Questions \(albertahealthservices.ca\)](https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/BGA_Frequently_Asked_Questions)