

Since we cannot determine if a blue-green algal bloom is producing toxins just by looking at it, we want people to be wary of any high concentration of blue-green algae in water. For a good rule of thumb, if you can wade knee-deep into water (without disturbing the sediment) and cannot see your feet because the water is green and opaque, or the water is any other unusual color, you should stay out. Algae cell densities are high enough that if the algae are producing toxins, you could become ill if you swallow water or inhale water droplets. Small children and pets should always be kept away from water in these conditions, since they are more likely to accidentally swallow water. At lower densities, you still want to avoid swallowing water as other pathogens may be present.

If you use common-sense precautions, you can safely enjoy recreation on Wisconsin's lakes and rivers:

- Choose locations without noticeably green water for swimming, because wind can concentrate blue-green algal blooms into near-shore areas. Do not swim in water that looks like "pea soup", green or blue paint, or that has a scum layer or puffy blobs floating on the surface.
- Do not boat, water ski, etc. over water that looks like "pea soup", green or blue paint, or that has a scum layer or puffy blobs floating on the surface (people can be exposed through inhalation).
- Do not let children play with scum layers, even from shore.
- Always offer fresh, clean water for pets to drink. Do not let pets swim in, or drink, waters experiencing blue-green algae blooms or noticeably green water.
- Always take a shower after coming into contact with any surface water (whether or not a blue-green algae bloom appears to be present; surface waters may contain other species of potentially harmful bacteria and viruses).
- Pets should be washed off immediately after swimming, before they groom.
- Always avoid swallowing untreated surface water – it may contain pathogens other than blue-green algae which could make you ill.

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services has provided the following guidelines concerning fish consumption:

- Algal toxins have not been shown to accumulate to acutely toxic levels in the fillet.
- Clean fish thoroughly and discard the viscera and guts, where toxins may accumulate.
- Wash hands after handling fish caught during an algal bloom.

There are still many unanswered questions about algal toxins in fish. The science is still emerging on chronic effects of consuming many fish meals over time when the fish live in water bodies that repeatedly experience heavy blooms. The DNR has a website with more information on safe eating guidelines: <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/fishing/consumption/index.html>

There is more information on blue-green algal blooms at the DNR's website:

<http://dnr.wi.gov/lakes/bluegreenalgae/>

and at the Department of Health Services' website: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/water/bg-algae/index.htm>