CYANOBACTERIA
A L E R T S

NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF
Environmental
Services

What are Cyanobacteria?

Microscopic cyanobacteria cells grow in lakes and produce food just like green plants. Usually, people cannot see cyanobacteria in lakes. However, warm weather and calm winds allow cyanobacteria to create blooms. During blooms, you may see lakes that are bluish-green, have floating green globs, or bluish surface scums.

Potential Problems

Cyanobacteria can, but do not always, produce toxins harmful to livestock, pets, or humans. Drinking contaminated water is the typical cause of illness. However, people have reported irritated skin, labored breathing and loose bowels after swimming in cyanobacteria blooms.

Monitoring Lakes and Beaches

Cyanobacteria live in water bodies around the world, including New Hampshire lakes. During summer sampling visits to lakes, NHDES biologists look for signs of blooms. Lake users should report any bloom to the cyanobacteria hotline at (603) 419-9229. NHDES investigates reported blooms, collects samples and analyzes samples within 24 hours.

If cyanobacteria growth levels in a lake are above state standards, NHDES warns local health officers and beach managers.

At beaches, managers post signs alerting people of the bloom. On lakes without a beach, NHDES posts warnings on the web, emails newsletters, and releases notices to the press.

What should I do if the water looks odd?

If you observe water that is greenish-blue, has floating globs, or is covered by a layer of scum, please:

- Do not wade or swim in the water!
- Do not drink the water or let children drink the water!
- Do not let pets or livestock into the water!

Anyone coming in contact with a cyanobacteria bloom or scum should rinse off with fresh water as soon as possible. If you observe a cyanobacteria bloom or scum, please call NHDES at (603) 419-9229.

Visit http://des.nh.gov and click "Beach Advisory" under the red ALERTS bell to view current advisories and warnings.