



## Wayne County Public Health Service Health Education

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Diane Devlin, Director of Public Health



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.  
Wayne County, NY

### **PRESS RELEASE**

**Date:** 6/11/2015

**Topic:** Potentially Harmful Blue Green Algae

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As we move into the summer months ahead, and water related activities increase, it is important to be aware of your safety when swimming, boating, and fishing in our numerous waters of Wayne County. Blue green algae can be a health risk, so it is important to follow all posted signs about the water safety in your area.

Blue-green algae, technically known as **cyanobacteria**, are microscopic organisms that are naturally present in lakes and streams. They usually are present in low numbers. Blue-green algae can become very abundant in warm, shallow, undisturbed surface water that receives a lot of sunlight. When this occurs, they can form blooms that discolor the water or produce floating rafts or scum on the surface of the water.

Some blue-green algae produce toxins that could pose a health risk to people and animals when they are exposed to them in large enough quantities. Health effects could occur when surface scum or water containing high levels of blue-green algal toxins are swallowed, through contact with skin or when airborne droplets containing toxins are inhaled while swimming, bathing or showering.

The best way to prevent exposure to blue-green algae toxins is to avoid water where scum, foam, or algae mats or a greenish color is present. If you spot any blue green algae blooms in the water, follow these additional precautions:

- Do **not** cook with, eat or drink from these waters (boiling will **NOT** remove toxins).
- Do **not** swim or shower in these waters.
- Do **not** allow your pets to swim in, drink from, or play near these waters.
- Do **not** water ski or ride a personal watercraft over algae mats.
- Do **not** water your lawns or gardens with these waters.

You can find a list of frequently asked questions and related information on algae blooms on the Wayne County Public Health home page at [www.co.wayne.ny.us](http://www.co.wayne.ny.us) or, for updates, by following Wayne County Public Health on our Facebook Page [www.facebook.com/waynecountypublichealth](https://www.facebook.com/waynecountypublichealth)

If you would like to report a blue-green algae sighting please go online to the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) @[www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/77118.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/77118.html).



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