

BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR ALGAE BLOOMS

Now that warmer temperatures are here, the Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) is advising residents living around or using lakes and rivers for recreational purposes, to take precautions when using the water when algae blooms are present.

When blue-green algae blooms are visible, there is a risk that the algae could produce toxins; therefore, using or drinking the water should be avoided. Toxins can irritate the skin and, if swallowed, can cause diarrhea and vomiting. At high enough levels, toxins may cause liver and nervous system damage.



RCDHU advises people using open bodies of water to be on the lookout for algae blooms. If blooms are visible:

- Avoid using the water for drinking, bathing, or showering and do not allow children, pets or livestock to drink or swim in the water.
- Residents should not boil the water. Boiling the water may release toxins into the water.
- Residents should avoid cooking with the water because food may absorb toxins from the water during cooking.
- Residents should exercise caution with respect to eating fish caught in water where blue-green algae blooms occur. Residents should not eat the liver, kidneys, and other organs of fish caught in the water.
- Do not treat the water with a disinfectant like bleach. This may break open algae cells and release toxins into the water.
- Residents should not rely on water jug filtration systems (i.e. Brita filters) as they do not remove toxins that may be in the water.
- People who use the surface water for their private drinking water supply should consider an alternate, protected source of water.

The Renfrew County and District Health Unit continues to monitor the surface water conditions for algae blooms and encourage the public to do the same. Should you see an algae bloom, report it to the Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks hotline at 1-800-268-6060.

For more information on blue-green algae, visit <https://www.rcdhu.com/healthy-living/safe-water/>, or contact the Renfrew County and District Health Unit at 613-735-8654, extension 555.