



UNDERSTANDING BLUE-GREEN ALGAE

WHAT ARE BLUE-GREEN ALGAE?

Blue-green algae are a type of bacteria that occur frequently in Florida's freshwater environments.



Blue-green algae, like plants, use light energy from the sun and nutrients acquired from the environment to help them grow.



A bloom occurs when rapid growth of algae leads to an accumulation of individual cells that discolor water and often produce floating mats that emit unpleasant odors. Blooms may negatively impact fish and other aquatic animals.



Some environmental factors that contribute to blue-green algae blooms are sunny days, warm water temperatures, still water conditions and a plentiful supply of nutrients.



Reducing the supply of nutrients, particularly nitrogen and phosphorus, can help decrease the intensity and duration of blue-green algal blooms.

ARE BLUE-GREEN ALGAE HARMFUL?

Many types of blue-green algae can produce toxins. Algal blooms can result in high toxin concentrations. Unfortunately, there are no visual signs that might indicate definitively when blue-green algae are producing toxins.



Ingestion of water with high concentrations of algal toxins can result in serious health effects.



Direct contact or breathing airborne droplets containing high levels of algal toxins can cause irritation of the skin, eyes, nose and throat.



In addition to health effects on people, blue-green algae blooms can cause health impacts in animals.



People and pets should not drink or swim in water where blue-green algae blooms are present. Children, the elderly, and those who are immunocompromised may be at risk even at low concentrations and should avoid any exposure.



DEP tests water samples regularly to determine the type of blue-green algae present. If the algae identified are known to produce toxins, additional testing is carried out to determine if toxins are present and how concentrated they are.



The presence and level of toxins produced by a bloom can vary. Therefore, recurring and persistent blooms are routinely monitored and retested.

WHERE CAN I REPORT A BLUE-GREEN ALGAL BLOOM?

Report algal blooms through:

ReportAlgalBloom.com
or 1-855-305-3903

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ProtectingFloridaTogether.gov