



State of Wisconsin  
Department of Health Services

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Jim Doyle, Governor  
Karen E. Timberlake, Secretary

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Fireworks “Boom!” Blue-Green Algae “Bloom!”**

July 4<sup>th</sup> marks Independence Day, but also the season when toxic blue-green algae may bloom in ponds and lakes, state health officials warn. Individuals can protect themselves, family and pets by avoiding contact with water containing visible amounts of blue-green algae.

“It’s great to have fun in Wisconsin waters, but coming into contact with or swallowing water with high levels of blue-green algae poses a health risk and can make you sick,” said Dr. Seth Foldy, State Health Officer. “People and pets should avoid swimming where the water looks like paint or pea soup.”

Algae blooms can form thick, foul-smelling layers on the surface of water and can range in color from green and fluorescent blue to red. Most adults will avoid entering water with an algae bloom, but kids and pets can be hard to keep out of the water – no matter how it looks or smells.

Always shower off with soap and water after swimming in lakes and rivers. If you come in contact with blue-green algae bloom, you may experience eye, throat, nose or skin irritation and gastrointestinal problems, such as vomiting or diarrhea. Symptoms can appear between a few hours and several days after exposure. Contact a physician if you experience muscle cramps, respiratory difficulties, nausea or vomiting following swimming in a lake or river.

“It’s a good idea to wash off with clean water after playing or swimming in any lake or river, and to wash hands before eating” Foldy says.

Foldy added that dogs exposed to algae should be rinsed off to prevent them from ingesting algal toxins while grooming themselves. Get immediate veterinary care if your pet develops any signs of illness.

For more information or to report a human or animal illness related to blue-green algae, call the State’s Division of Public Health at (608) 266-1120 or visit <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/eh/bluegreenalgae>

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