

Algae Blooms at the Lake

Information Sheet

1. What is an algae bloom?

- Algae are naturally occurring bacteria that live in lakes and waterways. The presence of sufficient nutrients, warm temperatures and high levels of sunlight, together with calm water provide the optimal growing conditions.
- A 'bloom' is when algae reproduces and can leave a 'scum' coating the water.
- Blue-green algae and associated toxins may be present in a waterbody without being visible to the naked eye.

2. Why are some algae a problem?

- 30-50% of cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) are not harmful and some people show no adverse effects of swimming in water containing an algae bloom. However, some blooms present in the water can cause adverse health effects to humans.
- If a person has contact with toxic blue-green algae they can develop skin irritation and/or an allergic reaction in their eyes, ears, nose and throat.
- Ingesting by accidentally swallowing water while swimming or diving can cause a number of side effects headaches, diarrhoea, vomiting, fever, abdominal pain and general malaise if you experience these symptoms you should contact your doctor immediately.
- If you should show signs of any of the above symptoms after swimming at the Lake you should consult your doctor immediately and report this to the Club via the website.

3. How has the Lake been affected by algae, in particular blue- green algae?

- The levels of algae in the Lake vary throughout the year with, generally, higher levels in the summer months.
- We record the presences of algae scum each morning throughout the summer and have a procedure in place to deal with any found. We also take bi-monthly water test samples to check the type and cell count of the algae present. We compare this to the Environment Agency guidelines and put up advisory notices if relevant.
- The Lake was part of a blue- green algae toxicity testing trial in the summer of 2016. Although the Lake had levels of blue-green algae above the EA's guideline levels, no blue-green algae toxicity was found. At other sites blue- green algae toxicity was only found where there was blue-green algae scum present.

3. How can I minimise the possibility of becoming adversely affected by a toxic algae bloom?

- Make sure you are aware of the signage at the Lake advising the current test results and if we are above the Environment Agency guidelines.
- Also look for visible signs of algae scum in the swimming area.
- Do not swim if you have any current or ongoing health conditions which may be adversely affected without speaking to your doctor first.
- Make sure you shower after swimming.
- Minimise the amount of water you ingest while swimming or diving.
- Minimise the amount of water which comes into contact with your skin or eyes; wear a wet suit and/or goggles.
- Children are more vulnerable than adults as they tend to have a smaller body mass and tend to swallow larger volumes of water while swimming – children will need supervising by their parents or guardians so that, if necessary, their activity can be restricted or modified.

Your safety at the Lake is our priority and your responsibility is to keep yourself informed on the current position by reading the posters on the water quality board positioned on the lawns and following the advice given.