

HEALTH ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 10, 2015

Health Advisory Issued for Toxic Blue-Green Algae in Kitsap Lake, Kitsap Creek & Chico Creek

KITSAP COUNTY, WA— A health advisory has been issued by the Kitsap Public Health District for Kitsap Lake, Kitsap Creek & Chico Creek due to the presence cyanobacteria – also known as toxic blue-green algae. If ingested in sufficient quantities, cyanobacteria can make people sick, and can kill pets, fish, waterfowl and livestock.

While test results from water samples collected from Kitsap Lake August 27 were below the guideline levels for a cyanobacteria health advisory, they indicated the presence of the toxic algae.

Test results for samples collected on Wed., Sept. 9 aren't expected early next week. However, because the cyanobacteria "sludge" has increased on the lake, and has been seen in Kitsap and Chico Creeks, Kitsap Public Health is issuing the health advisory, during which people should:

- Avoid ingesting lake or stream water. If a resident draws lake water for drinking purposes, they are encouraged to drink bottled water until further notice.
- Avoid swimming and other water contact sports (especially in areas where the algae are concentrated).
- Limit access of pets and livestock to the lake.
- Avoid consuming fish caught during the algae bloom.
- Rinse boats and trailers before going to another lake.

Warning signs are posted at public-access areas and roadsides around the lake. Kitsap Public Health will conduct additional weekly toxicity testing until the blooms subside.

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Area residents are also asked to contact Kitsap Public Health at 360-337-5235 if they notice any one of the following conditions:

- Large numbers of dead fish in the lake.
- Sudden or unexplained sickness or death of a pet cat or dog.
- If someone has entered the water and experiences skin rash, dizziness or weakness, respiratory allergy, abdominal pain, diarrhea, or vomiting.



Cyanobacteria bloom can be seen in Kitsap Lake and in Kitsap and Chico Creeks as it moves downstream. This photo was taken September 9 at the Kitsap Lake public fishing access area. (Kitsap Public Health District photo).

What causes cyanobacteria? Cyanobacteria reproduce rapidly in fresh water when the amount of sunlight, temperature and nutrients—such as phosphorus and nitrogen—are adequate. Within a few days, a lake can become cloudy and discolored with algae growth. This is called an algae “bloom.”

What does cyanobacteria look like?

Cyanobacteria usually float to the surface and can be several inches thick near the shoreline. The blooms can look like bright green paint floating on the surface of the water. When they die the algae may turn blue, white or brown.

Residents who live near lakes are encouraged to look for cyanobacteria blooms and call Kitsap Public Health when blooms are observed.

Kitsap Public Health monitors 26 lake swimming areas and 15 salt water swimming beaches for algae and bacteria levels to help keep Kitsap swimmers safe. Information on swimming beach closures is available online at www.kitsappublichealth.org/beaches and via phone by calling 1-800-2BE-WELL (1-800-223-9355).

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To report a waterborne illness other than swimmer's itch, the public is asked to call Kitsap Public Health (360) 337-5235 or submit information [on-line](#) at www.kitsappublichealth.org. Healthcare providers seeing patients this summer with flu-like symptoms should inquire about recent contact with water bodies and report suspected cases of water-borne illness to Kitsap Public Health which helps identify potentially contaminated sites as early as possible.

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