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NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

ACTON RESIDENTS ARE WARNED ABOUT THE BLUE-GREEN BLUES

BRYAN MYERS
bmyers@metroland.com

Nothing feels as good on a long weekend as a dip in the lake. But if you're planning to take that dip in Fairy Lake, you should reconsider.

Of five beaches routinely tested in Halton Region, Acton's own body of water tested positive for blue-green algae.

What does it all mean?

- Blue-green algae are microscopic plantlike organisms that occur naturally in ponds, rivers, lakes and streams.

- Despite the name, blue-green algae can also be olive-green or red.

- It's also not normally visible in the water, but a rapid increase can form a large bloom under the right conditions.

- Often, the new bloom smells like freshly-mowed lawn while the older bloom might smell like rotting garbage.

- Though goose poop is often blamed, phosphorus and nitrogen - often from agricultural or stormwater run-off - contributes to the growth of blue-green algae.

So what happens if I still go swimming in Fairy Lake?

- It might make you itchy, as it causes skin irritation.

- The bacteria can lead to an increased risk of eyes, nose, ears and throat infections.

- If swallowed, it might lead to gastrointestinal upset.

- Blue-green algae may also cause headaches and fever.



Bryan Myers/Torstar

Acton's Fairy Lake. The lake has tested positive for blue-green algae in 2019, and residents are warned to avoid swimming, drinking, or wading in the lake.

- Thick algae can be a swimming hazard.

How can you prevent getting those symptoms?

- If you think it's blue-green algae, avoid it.

- Don't drink, swim or wade in the water.

- Don't let your pets drink, swim or wade in it.

- Do not eat fish caught in water with blue-green algae.

- Call the Halton Region Health Department at 905-825-6000 ext. 7884, but they are aware of blue-green algae in Fairy Lake.

What can you do about it?

- Use phosphate-free detergents, personal care, and household cleaning products.

- Avoid using fertilizers on lawns, especially ones that contain phosphorus.

- Maintain a natural shoreline on lake and riverfront properties.

- Check septic systems to ensure that they do not leak into the water.

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