



DRINKING WATER AVOIDANCE ADVISORY

**FOR ALGAE TOXINS IN PRIVATE WATER SYSTEMS THAT
USE SURFACE WATER FROM
OAK LAKE**

*****THIS ADVISORY DOES NOT APPLY TO HOMES OR COTTAGES
THAT USE WELL WATER OR ARE CONNECTED TO A MUNICIPAL
WATER SYSTEM*****

Issued by the Medical Officer of Health, Prairie Mountain Health Regional Health Authority and
the Office of Drinking Water, Manitoba Sustainable Development
August 3, 2017

Recent water testing conducted by Manitoba Sustainable Development has identified the presence of
algae toxins (microcystins) in Oak Lake.

Home and cottage owners should not use water from Oak Lake for any consumptive purposes (ex:
drinking, cooking, making infant formula, washing fruits and vegetables, or brushing teeth).

Home and cottage owners who use lake water as a source for drinking water should be aware that most
small treatment systems cannot remove algal toxins. Boiling the water will not remove the algae toxins.
Adding chlorine to the water will not remove the toxins. Private water system owners are responsible for
assessing risks to their water system and ensuring the safety of their drinking water.

The Medical Officer of Health is recommending the following precautionary measures for private water
system owners that use water from Oak Lake:

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Avoid drinking or otherwise consuming the water when blue-green algal blooms are present in Oak Lake. During an algal bloom, use a safe alternate water source (ex: bottled water) for drinking (including pets), food preparation, making ice cubes and brushing teeth.**
- **Use a safe alternate drinking water source (ex: bottled water) for preparing infant formula. Parents should avoid using lakes prone to blue-green algal blooms for preparation of infant formula during the summer months.**
- **If large amounts of blue-green algae are visible near your water intake or if you see blue-green algae in your tap water, avoid using the water for bathing, personal hygiene or hand washing. Avoid swimming or bathing in water with blue-green algae blooms.**

Algae growths occur periodically on Manitoba lakes in the summer. Some types of blue-green algae produce liver or nervous system toxins. Symptoms of toxin poisoning may include: stomach upset, vomiting, headache and diarrhea. Symptoms may also include: muscles twitching, convulsions, or paralysis. Affects on the liver can also occur. Skin contact with some types of blue-green algae can cause skin and eye irritation. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, see your health care provider.

Please share this information with other people who use the lake water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (ex: renters, tenants, staff or clients).

DURATION

This advisory will remain in place for the remainder of the season.

Questions or concerns can be directed to the Office of Drinking Water at 204-945-5762. Health related questions can be directed to Health Links/Info Santé at 204-788-8200 (toll free at 1-888-315-9257). For more information on algae toxins or to report a bloom, contact the Water Science and Management Branch at: 204-945-0002 or visit the website at: www.manitoba.ca/beaches.