

CYANOBACTERIA



WHAT ARE CYANOBACTERIA ?

- Cyanobacteria (blue-green algae), are microscopic organisms found in all types of water usually in the warm summer and early Fall months.
- The bacteria live in fresh, combined salt and fresh water, and ocean water. Their food comes from an environment rich in phosphorous and nitrogen.
- The bacteria grow quickly into blooms that spread across water surfaces and can look like blue, bright green, brown, or red scum, foam, or mats.
- *Photos below from 2022 Summer cyanobacteria sites in Wellfleet.*



CYANOBACTERIA HEALTH DANGERS

- The bacteria toxins are powerful natural poisons and harmful to all living things
- Avoid going into or drinking from scummy water with colorful blooms.
- People and animals that come into contact with these blooms by swimming in or drinking the water should rinse off with fresh water immediately.
- Contact a healthcare provider for humans or veterinarian for a pet if exposed

HOW YOU CAN HELP WITH THIS ISSUE

- **The existence of cyanobacteria in water sources is expected to increase as our climate gets warmer.**
- **Learn to recognize the signs of this toxic poison.**
- Contact your **local public health department** to report the location of possible cyanobacteria contamination and they will follow up.
- Maintain and pump your septic system every three years to prevent leaks, etc.
- Use fertilizer according to label instructions to reduce runoff (excess nitrogen and phosphorous) into the environment.
- Tell others about harm from cyanobacteria so they are aware when out near ponds or lakes.