**IS IT BLUE-GREEN ALGAE ...OR SOMETHING ELSE?**

**Blue-green algae** are bacteria known as cyanobacteria and are a natural part of water bodies. With enough sunlight and nutrients, cyanobacteria can grow quickly and form a blue-green algae **bloom**.

- Blooms often look like spilled paint or pea soup and can change the color of the water to green, blue, turquoise, purple, tan, or white.
- **Blue-green algae can produce toxins that can make people and animals sick.**
- In Wisconsin, blooms are most common in the summer, or May to September.
- Blooms have look-alikes, so use your best judgment when choosing a spot to swim. Do not swim in discolored water or where you see foam, scum, or algal mats.

**HARMFUL**

- Green water that looks like pea soup
- Surface scum that looks like spilled paint
- Long, hair-like filamentous green algae
- Yellow plant pollen
- Tiny, green floating plants (duckweed)

**NOT HARMFUL**

- Blue-green algae are a natural part of water bodies and do not pose a health risk.

To learn more about blue-green algae, visit [www.dhs.wi.gov](http://www.dhs.wi.gov) and search “algae.”