What are blue-green algae?
Cyanobacteria, sometimes called blue-green algae, are microscopic organisms that live in all types of water.

What is a blue-green algae bloom?
• Blue-green algae grow quickly, or bloom, when the water is warm, slow-moving, and full of nutrients.

What are some characteristics of blue-green algae blooms?
• Algae usually bloom during the summer and fall. However, they can bloom anytime during the year.
• When a bloom occurs, scum might form on the water’s surface.
• Blooms can be many different colors, from green or blue to red or brown.
• As the bloom dies off, you might smell an odor that is similar to rotting plants.

What is a toxic bloom?
Sometimes, blue-green algae produce toxins.
• The toxins can be present in the algae or in the water.

Other important things to know:
• Swallowing water that has algae or algal toxins in it can cause serious illness.
• Dogs might have more severe symptoms than persons, including collapse and sudden death after swallowing the contaminated water while swimming or after licking algae from their fur.
• There are no known antidotes to these toxins. Medical care is supportive.

You cannot tell if a bloom is toxic by looking at it.

To report a blue-green algae bloom or related health event:
Call your local or state health department

For more information:
http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/hsb/hab/default.htm
or
Call the National Center for Environmental Health Harmful Algal Blooms Program (HABISS)
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: 866-556-0544
What we know about exposure to blue-green algae and cyanotoxins and possible health effects

Information about human health effects from exposure to blue-green algae and toxins is primarily derived from a few epidemiology studies of recreational exposures; studies with laboratory animals; reports of extreme human exposure events, such as the use of toxin-contaminated dialysis water; and from animal (e.g., cattle and pet dog) exposures. References are available at:  http://www.cdc.gov/hab/links.htm

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<th>Potential exposure route</th>
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<th>Possible symptoms and signs</th>
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| Swallowing water contaminated with blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) or toxins | Data from laboratory animal studies, extreme human exposure events, and animal exposures | **Hepatotoxins and nephrotoxins**  
Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea  
Bad taste in mouth  
Acute hepatitis, jaundice  
Blood in urine or dark urine  
Malaise, lethargic  
Headache, fever  
Loss of appetite |
| Skin contact with water that is contaminated with blue-green algae or toxins | Data from human studies | **Neurotoxins**  
Progression of muscle twitches  
For saxitoxin: high doses may lead to progressive muscle paralysis |
| Inhaling aerosols contaminated with blue-green algae or toxins | Anecdotal evidence from human exposures and data from human studies | Allergic dermatitis (including rash, itching and blisters)  
Conjunctivitis  
Upper respiratory irritation (wheezing, coughing, chest tightness, shortness of breath) |