

Information about Blue-Green Algae. and Weil's Disease



Blue-Green algae are present in all inland water, including Priory Lake. They are not a new phenomenon, having present since fossil times, but hot weather and the growth of nutrients have caused an increase in the number of algae, particularly at the edges of shallow water.

The algae are potentially toxic, and ingestion of high concentrations of algae can be dangerous. Fortunately the exercise of a few simple precautions reduces the risk to an entirely acceptable level.

Weil's Disease is spread by rats, and the growth of the rat population has caused inland water, surrounded by their nesting sites, to contain the organism responsible. The organism enters the body through cuts and abrasions or through the nose and throat. The incubation period is 7-13 days, and symptoms include fever, muscular pains and loss of appetite - rather like flu.

Once again prevention is a relatively simple matter, but the condition must be recognised and if flu-like symptoms are experienced 1-3 weeks after sailing then a doctor should be seen. It is unsafe to assume that it is flu.

Those at risk, in descending order are;

- Swimmers, paddlers, dogs, children playing at the water's edge, beginner windsurfers.
- Dinghy sailors, canoeists, advanced windsurfers,
- Fishermen, powerboat drivers.

Precautions:

- Minimise contact with water.
- Keep non-sailors and children away from the water's edge.
- Hose down all items after sailing.
- Do not handle food without washing.
- Soak wetsuits in fresh water after use.
- Do not store wet clothing.
- Keep cuts, scratches and broken skin covered while sailing.
- Shower immediately after sailing.
- Wear shoes of some kind and keep lower limbs covered.

And finally:

Please remember that we have not had any incidents so far at PSC and that we monitor the situation all the time and keep in touch with Bedford Borough Council who test the water. More information is available and will be shown to you.

Please retain this information to remind you of the symptoms of the infections and of the precautions you should take,