The City of Bremerton is pleased to serve you. For more information, please visit www.BremertonWA.gov or call the City of Bremerton Customer Response Line (360) 473-5920, the Kitsap Public Health District (360) 728-2235, Washington State Department of Health (360) 236-3030, or the EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline 1-800-426-4791.

Fact Sheet: Cyanotoxins and Drinking Water

Your Drinking Water Quality
The City of Bremerton ensures the quality of your drinking water by proper operation of the water system and regular testing of water supplies. The City has been providing clean, safe water to our customers since 1917. The quality of Bremerton's tap water is excellent and complies with all required protective health standards.

What are cyanobacteria?
Cyanobacteria, also called blue-green algae, are microscopic organisms found naturally in fresh and marine water. These organisms use sunlight to make their own food. In warm, nutrient-rich (high in phosphorus and nitrogen) environments, cyanobacteria can multiply quickly, creating blooms that spread across the water's surface.

Why are some cyanobacteria blooms harmful?
Harmful cyanobacteria blooms may affect people, animals, or the environment by making toxins, called cyanotoxins. They can make people, their pets, and other animals sick. Unfortunately, there are no remedies to counteract the effects. You cannot tell if a bloom has released toxins by looking at it.

Are there cyanotoxins in Bremerton's water supply?
No algal toxins have been detected in Bremerton's sampling of source water and treated drinking water as it enters the distribution system. Bremerton's drinking water system is at low risk for cyanotoxins. About sixty percent of Bremerton's drinking water comes from surface water in the Union River Reservoir. Our lake has very low nutrient levels, so we have low risk of toxin-forming algae to be present. Groundwater is not a source of cyanotoxins.

What are the health effects of cyanotoxins?
People who drink water with high concentrations of cyanobacterial toxins may experience gastroenteritis, skin irritation, allergic responses, and damage to the liver or nervous system. According to the Centers for Disease Control, no human deaths in the United States have been caused by cyanotoxins.

How are cyanotoxins regulated?
The EPA has issued Drinking Water Health Advisories for two cyanobacterial toxins: microcystins and cylindrospermopsin. Cyanotoxins are also included in the Contaminant Candidate List, which identifies contaminants that may need regulation under the Safe Drinking Water Act, and data is currently being collected nationally on cyanotoxin occurrence.

How is the City of Bremerton protecting the public's health from cyanotoxins?
We regularly monitor the reservoir for many parameters, including tracking the variety of naturally-occurring algae that grow at low levels near the surface of the reservoir. Our water intake in the reservoir is well below the surface. We are also participating in EPA-required monitoring of cyanotoxins – we have taken several samples of both raw water and treated distribution water this spring and there were no cyanotoxins detected. We will be taking several more samples through the summer of 2018.