

## TIPS TO PREVENT SWIMMING RELATED ILLNESSES AND INJURIES

### Prevention Measures for People – Actions That May Be Taken by Swimmers and People Supervising Younger Swimmers

It has been known for decades that there is some risk of disease transmission in swimming waters. While it does not appear possible to eliminate the risk of illness or injury, it is possible to reduce and control risk. The following information is intended to help citizens take the necessary steps to prevent illness and injury to themselves and others using public swimming areas.

#### A. REDUCE YOUR OWN RISKS

- **Drowning prevention** – Before swimming, find out where the safety equipment is located so you can help others in need of it. Make sure that personal flotation devices are available and are worn when boating. These are especially important for persons using canoes, kayaks, inflatable boats, jet skis, and other watercraft.
- **Avoid areas where animal manure or human sewage is discharged** – There are many bacteria, viruses, and parasites that cause disease in humans that can come from and be spread by the fecal material of man and animals (both wild and domestic).
- **Don't drink (swallow) the water while you are swimming** – It's probably impossible to avoid swallowing some water while swimming but the less you swallow, the less chance of getting enough germs to make you sick.
- **If you have an immune deficiency, consult your healthcare provider before swimming you** – People with immune deficiency problems are at higher risk even in disinfected swimming pool water. ([Cryptosporidium](#) and [Giardia](#) are extremely resistant to chlorination.)
- **Avoid large crowds of bathers** – The larger the number of swimmers, the higher the risk of illness transmission.
- **Protect yourself from Swimmer's Itch** – Avoid swimming in areas where there is evidence of a lot of waterfowl (ducks, geese, etc.). Towel dry immediately after swimming. Some swimmers have had some success in preventing Swimmer's Itch by applying a good waterproof sunscreen prior to entering the water.
- **Avoid small, shallow ponds** – These areas are frequently very biologically rich with bacteria and parasites which can cause illness in humans.

#### B. AVOID BECOMING A SOURCE OF CONTAMINATION

- Shower before you swim
- Do not swim if you or your children have or had diarrhea or loose stools within the last two days.
- Keep children who are not toilet trained out of the water.
- Do not allow children with dirty diapers in the water.
- Do not swim if you have a skin infection.
- Keep dogs and pets out of swimming areas.

**C. REPORT ILLNESS ASSOCIATED WITH SWIMMING**

Report any of the following to the **Thurston County Disease Reporting Line at (360) 786-5470**.

- Any illness occurring within two days after swimming (this includes yourself, a family member, or group member that swam). Also notify your healthcare provider.
- Lab tests which tested positive for Giardia, Cryptosporidium, Shigella, E.coli 0157:H7, Hepatitis A, or any other illness, including diarrhea or loose stools, that you suspect is associated with swimming.
- Swimmers itch or other skin rashes that you think may be associated with swimming.