



News Release

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Shore up your safety plans before you head to the beach for summer fun

Hints will help you stay safe and sound on the Sound, peaceful at the Pacific

OLYMPIA — The warmth of the sun has finally reached Washington, sending people toward the state's beaches to catch a wave all summer long.

But don't go near the water until you're ready to play it safe on the sand.

The Washington State Department of Health offers these tips to help you avoid harm on the state's beautiful saltwater beaches:

- **Surf the Web before you surf the beach.** Check Washington's [BEACH Program](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/WaterRec/beach/default.htm) Web site (<http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/WaterRec/beach/default.htm>) to see if a swimming advisory has been posted because of high bacteria levels. If an advisory has been issued for the beach you plan to visit, choose another beach or activity.
- **Don't swim when conditions could make you sick.** Stay out of the water for 48 hours after it rains, especially if it's been dry for awhile. Rain sends stormwater runoff to beaches, carrying toxins, along with waste from pets and leaking septic systems.
- **Don't swim in urban creeks.** Creeks may seem safe, but they carry stormwater runoff, usually have high bacteria levels, and often contain toxins. Teach children to avoid them.
- **Use good hygiene.** Bacteria from people can spread disease at beaches. Wash your hands with soap or sanitizer after using the restroom. Help children do the same. Don't swallow beach water. People who are sick or who have diarrhea should leave the water immediately. Take children for frequent restroom breaks. Change diapers away from the water's edge. Never bury them in the sand — small children or animals may dig them up.

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- **Wear sunscreen.** Washington has one of the nation's highest skin cancer rates. Reduce your risk with a few simple habits: Use sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher, apply sunscreen 30 minutes before going outdoors, and reapply it every hour or two. Keep infants out of direct sunlight. Avoid the sun from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. [Know your risks](http://www.skincancer.org) (www.skincancer.org).
- **Prevent drowning.** Most people who drown know how to swim but aren't wearing life jackets. Many victims are 14 or younger. [Wear a life jacket](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Topics/WaterSafety.htm) (www.doh.wa.gov/Topics/WaterSafety.htm) on watercraft even if you know how to swim, designate a responsible adult to watch young children, and swim with a buddy. Learn CPR. Watch for dangerous waves and rip currents; don't swim at beaches such as Ocean Shores and Long Beach where they're common. In a rip current, swim parallel to shore; once free of the current, swim toward shore.
- **Be careful when harvesting shellfish.** Collecting and eating shellfish from Washington beaches is a popular pastime, but [make sure you're safe](http://ww4.doh.wa.gov/gis/mogifs/biotoxin.htm) (ww4.doh.wa.gov/gis/mogifs/biotoxin.htm) before eating your catch. Serious disease, and even death, can result from contaminated shellfish. Always ["Know Before You Dig"](http://www.doh.wa.gov/shellfishsafety.htm) (www.doh.wa.gov/shellfishsafety.htm).

Follow these hints, and you'll have fun, fun, fun until you put the swimsuit away.

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Visit the Washington Department of Health Web site at <http://www.doh.wa.gov> for a healthy dose of information.