



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Swimmers Should Be Aware of Waterborne Illness

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BURLINGTON –Vermonters should be aware this summer of recreational water illnesses that could be caused by swallowing, breathing, or having contact with contaminated water from swimming pools, spas, lakes and rivers.

The Vermont Department of Health recommends swimming only in designated recreational swim areas that are tested regularly for E. coli levels. Contaminated water can cause a variety of symptoms including ear pain or skin irritation. The most commonly reported symptom is diarrhea, which can be caused by Cryptosporidium, Giardia, Shigella, E.coli and Norovirus.

Swimming is also not recommended after heavy rainfall.

E. coli concentrations help determine if a water area is suitable for swimming. If tests are returned as “unsuitable,” the water could contain not only E. coli, but other similar disease organisms that may be in animal or human waste.

The primary sources of E. coli contamination in surface waters are untreated wastes from failing septic systems, runoff from livestock farms, or concentrations of wildlife such as large flocks of resident geese.

Tests for E.coli are done weekly at all Vermont State Park beaches. Town park and recreation departments can also test recreational water. The Health Department laboratory offers a “Kit B” for recreational water testing for anyone who wants to test their private pond or lakeshore recreation area. Kits are available for \$15.00.

To **order a kit**, call the laboratory at 1-800-660-9997. For more information on waterborne illness, visit healthvermont.gov.

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