

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Stay Healthy While Swimming This Summer

BREMERTON, WA— Kitsap Public Health District is busy this time of year, monitoring 26 lake swimming areas and 15 salt water swimming beaches for algae and bacteria levels to help keep Kitsap swimmers safe. With temperatures on the rise, Kitsap Public Health wants to remind residents about some important tips to stay healthy while swimming.

More than 300 swimmers became ill after swimming in Horseshoe Lake in South Kitsap in July 2014. It was a norovirus that caused the illnesses, likely introduced to the lake by a sick swimmer. “While lakes and swimming beaches can be tested for bacteria, there is no effective method to test for virus particles in water. It is very important that people stay out of swimming areas and pools when they are sick – and to stay out of the water for at least 48 hours after their symptoms stop,” said Jim Zimny, Food and Living Environment Program Manager for Kitsap Public Health.

Water-borne illnesses aren’t just an issue in lakes and beaches. Contrary to popular belief, chlorine does not kill all germs instantly. There are germs today that are very tolerant to chlorine and were not known to cause human disease until recently. Once these germs get in the pool, it can take anywhere from minutes to days for chlorine to kill them. Swallowing just a little water that contains these germs can make you sick. Public pools and spas are tested by Kitsap Public Health staff year-round.

There are a number of common sense things people can do to help avoid introducing pathogens into public swimming pools and swimming areas, and to reduce the risk of becoming ill with a waterborne illness.

Don’t swim if you are sick!

- **Don’t go into the water if you are sick!** People with infectious illness, including vomiting or diarrhea, should not go swimming or to public recreation areas.
- People who have been sick should avoid public recreation areas, swimming beaches and pools for **at least 48 hours** after they start feeling better and symptoms have stopped.

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Use Soap and Water!

- Swimmers should shower thoroughly before entering and after exiting the water.
- Swimmers wash hands and faces thoroughly with soapy water before eating or preparing food.
- Everyone should thoroughly wash their hands with soapy water after using the restroom or changing diapers.

Help Keep the Water Clean

- Children who are not toilet trained should wear swim diapers in the water, and young children should be taken on frequent bathroom breaks while swimming.
- Avoid attracting birds (e.g., by feeding them) to areas where people are swimming. Bird droppings may contribute to the parasites in the water that cause swimmers' itch and also may carry illness-causing bacteria.

Avoid Swimmers' Itch

- Use sunscreen - It protects from sun burn and helps prevent swimmer's itch.
- Swimmers should avoid areas where swimmer's itch is a known problem or where signs have been posted warning of unsafe water.

Additional Reminders

- Swimmers should never drink lake or pool water and should avoid getting water in their mouths.
- If you see something odd or concerning, call Kitsap Public Health!
- Observe and obey warning signs at swimming areas. They are there for a reason: to keep you healthy and safe!

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For more information, please contact:

Jim Zimny | Manager

Food & Living Environment Program

Kitsap Public Health District

345 6th St., Suite 300 | Bremerton, WA 98337

(360) 337-5623 Office | (360) 337-5235 Main

jim.zimny@kitsappublichealth.org | kitsappublichealth.org

Karen McKay Bevers | Public Information Officer

Kitsap Public Health District

345 6th St., Suite 300 | Bremerton, WA 98337

(360) 307-4252 Office | (360) 337-5235 Main

karen.bevers@kitsappublichealth.org | kitsappublichealth.org