

Why Are Beaches Posted?

Beaches are posted with warning signs because the water may contain high levels of bacteria. These can increase a swimmer's risk of developing irritations and infections. The most common problems are minor skin, eye, ear, nose, and throat infections, and stomach illness.

Guidelines For Postings

Ontario beaches are posted with warnings of possible health risks when elevated *Escherichia coli* (E. coli) levels are present. The current E. coli test is an indicator that fecal contamination was present at the time of sampling.

Water quality may change to either safe or unsafe for swimming between samples. There could be harmful bacteria, parasites and/or viruses present in the water that are not tested for.



The water is safe most of the time, however caution must always be taken when swimming in any natural water source.

What Is Polluting Our Beaches?


- ▶ Elevated levels of E. coli often occur after heavy rainfall because of surface water runoff.
- ▶ Fecal material from birds, pets and wildlife. Storm sewers can also wash into rivers and lakes.
- ▶ Faulty or overworked septic systems, agricultural runoff and sewage treatment plant bypasses to mention a few.


The Health Unit **samples beaches weekly** from late June through to Labour Day, following the provincial guidelines. During this time, visit our website for the most up-to-date information regarding beach sampling results.




<http://www.healthunit.org/water/test/beaches.htm>

What Do Green, Yellow and Red Mean?

 **OPEN** – At the time of sampling, the latest bacterial test of the water indicated **acceptable levels** of bacteria for recreational use.

 **WARNING** - The water is not **recommended for recreational use.** The latest bacterial tests of the water indicated unacceptable levels of bacteria.

 **CLOSED – DO NOT USE.** The beach is closed for recreational use due to an identified health hazard/condition that makes the beach unsafe for use.

Should you swim?

You should not swim if the water is cloudy due to wave action or following a heavy rainfall. Cloudy water can be an indication of high levels of bacteria that may pose a risk to human health as well as pose a safety risk as you are unable to see what is in the water. Shallow, sheltered and warm water may also contain high levels of bacteria.



While the Health Unit strives to alert swimmers when conditions are not suitable for swimming, the public must be aware that conditions may change, and that there is always a level of risk when swimming in untreated water.