



OHIO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH BEACH SAFETY FAQs

Beach water can become polluted from many sources including, but not limited to, sanitary sewer, storm sewer, and combined sewer overflows; urban, rural, and agricultural runoff; malfunctioning septic tanks and aeration systems; industrial wastes, boating wastes, human and animal wastes.

How do I know when it is safe to swim at the beach?

When the bacteria or cyanotoxin levels at a monitored beach are abnormally high, the beach operator erects warning signs to alert you to the potentially hazardous conditions. If you don't see the warning signs, it's probably safe to go into the water.

If a sign is erected it means that the level of bacteria or cyanotoxins in the water are currently higher than the maximum standard that is used for evaluating beaches. If you are already sick, or if your immune system is weakened, your risk of becoming ill is greater if you swim.

What kinds of illnesses could I get from swimming in contaminated water?

Most swimming-related illnesses are minor. They require little or no treatment and have no long-term health effects. The most common illness associated with swimming in polluted water is gastroenteritis with the following symptoms: nausea, vomiting, headache, stomachache, fever and diarrhea. Other illnesses associated with swimming include eye, ear, nose, and throat infections.

If I get sick after swimming, what should I do?

If you think you became sick from swimming at the beach, you should consult your doctor. You should also tell the beach operator or your local health district. That way, the water can be tested again and the beach area can be assessed for potential contamination sources.

How can I get information about a beach before I go?

You can call the beach operator to learn about current beach conditions. You can also check the Ohio Department of Health website at: www.odh.ohio.gov/healthybeaches