



## CHIPPEWA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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**From: Suzanne Lieurance R.S., Environmental Health Supervisor**

**Date: July 19, 2024**

**RE: SWIMMER'S ITCH ADVISORY**

The Chippewa County Health Department has issued an advisory to recreational swimmers to be aware of possible infections with SWIMMER'S ITCH, which has been detected in people swimming in the surface waters of the St. Marys River at Sherman Park. Other areas of Whitefish Bay off West Lakeshore Drive/Curley Lewis Highway, and Waishkey Bay, in Bay Mills Township, Michigan, may be affected.

Swimmer's itch, also called cercarial dermatitis, appears as a skin rash caused by an allergic reaction to certain parasites that infect some birds and mammals. These microscopic parasites are released from infected snails into fresh and salt water (such as lakes, ponds, and oceans). While the parasite's preferred host is the specific bird or mammal, if the parasite comes into contact with a swimmer, it burrows into the skin, causing an allergic reaction and rash. **Swimmers are also advised to towel off vigorously immediately after leaving the water to prevent swimmer's itch.**

Most cases of swimmer's itch do not require medical attention. If you have a rash, you may try the following for relief:

- Use corticosteroid cream
- Apply cool compresses to the affected areas
- Bathe in Epson salts or baking soda
- Soak in colloidal oatmeal baths, or use lotions containing colloidal oatmeal
- Apply baking soda paste to the rash (made by stirring water into baking soda until it reaches a paste-like consistency)
- Use an anti-itch lotion, such as Calamine lotion

Though difficult, try not to scratch. Scratching may cause the rash to become infected. If itching is severe, your health care provider may suggest prescription-strength lotions or creams to lessen your symptoms.

It is advisable for individuals to not swim following a strong and persistent on-shore wind. Children who continuously go in and out of the water are at a greater risk for contracting Swimmer's Itch.

Individuals who display signs of severe infection from swimmer's itch are advised to seek medical attention.

For information on Swimmer's Itch, visit [About Swimmer's Itch | Swimmer's Itch \(Cercarial Dermatitis\) | CDC](#), or go to [www.cdc.gov/swimmers-itch](http://www.cdc.gov/swimmers-itch) or call Environmental Health at (906) 635-3622.

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