



Public Health Administration

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Public Health Reminds Residents About Fresh Water Parasites

BUTTE COUNTY, Calif. – Butte County Public Health (BCPH) is reminding the public that during the summer months, some fresh water lakes and ponds may contain very small parasites that can cause an allergic reaction and/or rash, commonly referred to as swimmer's itch. The parasites are released from infected snails and then spread to birds and other water animals who shed the organism, which are more likely to be present in shallow water near the shoreline.

Anyone who swims or wades in infested water may be at risk. However, children are most often affected because they tend to swim, wade, and play in the shallow water more than adults. The most common symptoms may include: tingling, burning or itching skin, small reddish pimples and small blisters.

Swimmer's itch is not contagious and cannot be spread from one person to another person. Most cases of swimmer's itch do not require medical attention.

To reduce the risk of swimmer's itch:

- Choose swimming spots carefully. Avoid swimming in areas where swimmer's itch is a known problem or signs warn of possible contamination.
- Avoid the shoreline or swimming/wading in marshy areas where snails and waterfowl are commonly found.
- Rinse after swimming. Rinse exposed skin with clean water immediately after leaving the water, then vigorously dry your skin with a towel. Launder your swimsuits often.
- Don't feed birds on docks or near swimming areas.

If you have a rash or irritated skin after swimming in fresh water, you may try the following for relief – if these remedies do not help, it is recommended to consult with your healthcare provider.

- Use corticosteroid cream
- Apply cool compresses to the affected areas
- Bathe in Epsom salts or baking soda
- Soak in colloidal oatmeal baths
- 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

For more information, visit the [CDC Swimmer's Itch FAQ website:](https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/swimmersitch/faqs.html)
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