



# Enjoy the Beach

healthful

## Summer! Heat! Holiday! Beach!

That's the way it should be. Although sometimes, things don't always work out as planned. Sometimes the water at the beach is not recommended to bathers.

### Posting a Beach

In Eastern Ontario, the water of municipal beaches is tested by the local Health Unit. If a problem is detected in those tests, a public health inspector, under the Medical Officer of Health's authority, will post the beach.

Posting a beach means putting up notices advising all swimmers that the water is unsafe. It could cause a variety of medical problems like gastroenteritis or irritations and infections to skin, eyes, nose, ear and throat. The levels of bacteria contained in the water will determine its safety to bathers. A beach may also be posted if the inspector notices floating debris, oils, scum, excessive algae growth, bad odours and turbidity.

### Why is a beach posted?

An elevated bacteria density in the water is the major cause of postings. The most common bacteria is E.coli,

which may indicate the existence of fecal coliforms (FC), an organism present in the feces of virtually all warm-blooded animals. In Ontario, the recreational water quality guideline is a maximum of 100 E. coli per 100 ml of water.

A beach that has been posted because of high contamination levels will be subjected to more frequent water sampling.

### What causes contamination?

Very little movement or flow in a body of water may create the right conditions for contamination. However, this water degradation is preventable.

Three main elements contaminate the water sources in this region. First, structures meant to hold agricultural and domestic fecal contaminants may erode or malfunction, causing runoff that allows bacteria to enter streams and drainage ditches. Large population of waterfowl and other wildlife that colonize a beach, domestic animals left to defecate, and livestock

that have free access to streams or rivers are major polluters. Finally, beach postings often occur after a rainstorm. Storm water runoff washes fecal material from all different sources into rivers and lakes, contributing to water pollution.

## What can you do?

### Several things can be done to remedy the situation:

- ① *Pet owners must adhere to the "stoop and scoop" by-laws and remove dog feces immediately.*
- ① *Detach eaves troughs from sewers so they can discharge onto lawns and other permeable surfaces.*
- ① *Reduce household water use to avoid overflow problems in sewage treatment plants.*
- ① *Fence livestock away from streams and provide them with alternate water sources.*
- ① *Ensure that runoff from feedlots and manure piles is properly contained.*
- ① *Upgrade septic systems and keep them in good working order.*

## Questions?

613-933-1375 or 1 800 267-7120  
Ask for the Health Line