

DHD#10 IS RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT SWIMMER'S ITCH

July 15, 2022 – District Health Department #10 (DHD#10) is raising awareness of Cercarial Dermatitis, also known as Swimmer's Itch. While you and your friends and family head out to your favorite lakes, rivers, and ponds, DHD#10 wants you to be aware of swimmer's itch and how to avoid it.

What is swimmer's itch?

Swimmer's itch, also called cercarial dermatitis, appears as a skin rash caused by an allergic reaction to certain microscopic parasites that infect some birds and mammals. These parasites are released from infected snails into fresh and salt water (such as lakes, ponds, and oceans).

Anyone who swims or wades in infested water may be at risk. Larvae are more likely to be present in shallow water by the shoreline. Children are most often affected because they tend to swim, wade, and play in the shallow water more than adults. Also, they are less likely to towel dry themselves when leaving the water.

What can be done to reduce the risk of swimmer's itch?

To reduce the likelihood of developing swimmer's itch

- Do not swim in areas where swimmer's itch is a known problem or where signs have been posted warning of unsafe water
- Do not swim near or wade in marshy areas where snails are commonly found.
- Towel dry or shower immediately after leaving the water
- Do not attract birds (e.g., by feeding them) to areas where people are swimming

Signs and Symptoms

- Tingling, burning, or itching of the skin
- Small reddish pimples
- Small blisters

Do I need to see my healthcare provider for treatment?

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 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

While swimmer's itch is not contagious, scratching the areas may result in secondary bacterial infections. Itching may last up to a week or more, but will gradually go away. If the itching is severe, your healthcare provider may suggest prescription-strength lotions or creams to lessen your symptoms.

For more info about swimmer's itch, please visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/swimmersitch/faqs.html>.



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