

# Treatment

Most swimmer's itch cases don't require medical attention. If you have a rash, try the following for relief:

- Use corticosteroid cream.
- Apply cool compresses to 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.
- See a doctor if symptoms persist.

Try not to scratch. Scratching may cause the rash to become infected. If itching is severe, your health care provider may suggest prescription-strength lotion or cream to lessen your symptoms.

## Resources

For more water related information, call (253) 798-6470 or email [ehsurfacewater@tpchd.org](mailto:ehsurfacewater@tpchd.org).



For swimmer's itch information, scan the QR code or visit [www.tpchd.org/swimmersitch](http://www.tpchd.org/swimmersitch).

**Current Surface Water Advisories and Lake Swimming Beaches**  
[www.tpchd.org/surfacewater](http://www.tpchd.org/surfacewater)

**Toxic Algae (Cyanobacteria)**  
[www.tpchd.org/toxicalgae](http://www.tpchd.org/toxicalgae)

**Water Safety Tips**  
**Washington State Department of Health**  
[www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/WaterRecreation/LakeRiverandBeachSafety.aspx](http://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/WaterRecreation/LakeRiverandBeachSafety.aspx)

**Drowning prevention tips and life jacket coupon—Seattle Children's Hospital**  
[www.seattlechildrens.org/classes-community/community-programs/drowning-prevention/](http://www.seattlechildrens.org/classes-community/community-programs/drowning-prevention/)

**Healthy Swimming and Recreational Water—CDC**  
[www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/](http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/)



# Swimmer's Itch Facts



## What you need to know!



## What is Swimmer's Itch?

Each summer, swimmers report a skin rash, commonly called swimmer's itch (also called cercarial dermatitis).

- Caused by an allergic reaction to a parasite (cercariae) that burrow into swimmer's skin.
- Most commonly occurs in early summer at local lakes and beaches.

### Where do the parasites come from?

The adult parasite exists in the blood of infected waterfowl and aquatic animals.



### Who is at risk for swimmer's itch?

Anyone who swims or wades in infested waters may be at risk.

Parasites that cause swimmer's itch are more likely to be present in shallow water by the shoreline.

Children are most often affected because they tend to swim, play, and wade in shallow water more than adults.

Although it can be irritating, swimmer's itch isn't contagious.

## Signs and Symptoms

Within minutes to days after swimming in contaminated water, you may experience these symptoms:

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

Not everyone is sensitive to swimmer's itch. Reactions vary from hardly noticeable to considerable pain, severe itching, swelling, and possibly fever.

Swelling usually subsides within a week, but redness can last longer. A person's sensitivity to swimmer's itch may increase with each exposure.



\*Small reddish pimples may appear.



\*\*Pimples may develop into small blisters.



## Reduce your Risk of Swimmer's Itch.

### Do not:

- Do not swim in areas where swimmer's itch is a known problem or where signs are posted warning of unsafe water.
- Do not attract ducks or other waterfowl (e.g., by feeding them) to areas where people are swimming.
- Do not swim in areas where there are often ducks or other waterfowl.

### Do:

- Apply a good, waterproof sunscreen before you enter the water. There is evidence that this may provide some protection.
- Towel off aggressively after each swim.
- Take a hot, soapy shower as soon as possible after leaving the water.