



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
Panhandle Health District

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Healthy People in Healthy Communities



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Public Contact: 877-415-5225

Media Contact: Katherine Hoyer

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208-415-5108

Take Precautions when Enjoying Water Recreation

PANHANDLE HEALTH DISTRICT — Panhandle Health District (PHD) and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) advise the public to “enter water at your own risk” this summer.

“Any time you are choosing to recreate in the beautiful bodies of water in North Idaho, there is potential risk for pathogens like swimmer’s itch, harmful algal blooms, or bacterial infections that can cause health problems and sickness,” said Katherine Hoyer, Public Information Officer for PHD. “With the extreme heat we’ve been experiencing over the past week and temperatures only cooling into the 90s next week, it creates a breeding ground for organisms to easily grow and multiply.”

Here are several tips to help our community enjoy our bodies of water safely:

Be aware of where you are choosing to swim:

- Pay attention to signage and avoid swimming in waters that are under a health advisory. DEQ and PHD work together to identify harmful algal blooms and release a health advisory if one is found.
- Do not swim or play in stagnant water or water with dead fish or algae in it.
- Do not swim or play in waters near sewer pipes, discharge pipes, or storm drain outlets.
- Do not swim in water that is also frequented by livestock or other land animals.

Recreation safety tips:

- Avoid getting the water in your mouth, and do not drink or swallow the water.
- Reduce the risk of water going up your nose by holding your nose shut or using nose clips.

- Avoid digging in or stirring up the sediment while taking part in water-related activities in shallow, warm areas.
- Do not swim if you have open wounds or sores or if you are experiencing diarrhea.
- Shower with soap and water after swimming or playing in the water.
- Promptly tend to any wounds, cuts or abrasions you get while in or near the water: thoroughly wash the wound with clean, potable water and soap, and seek a doctor's care if a rash or swelling develops around the wound or it appears infected.
- Seek a doctor's care immediately if you become ill or develop symptoms of an infection.

Prevent swimmer's itch and other potentially harmful illness:

- Do not swim in areas where swimmer's itch is a known problem.
- 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.

If you suspect a harmful algal bloom, report it here: www.deq.idaho.gov/water-quality/surface-water/cyanobacteria-harmful-algal-blooms/.

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Panhandle Health District provides over 40 different public health programs to families, individuals and organizations in northern Idaho. From food and drinking water safety to health education and disease control, public health services are critical to ensure our community is a safe and healthy place to live, work and play.

The PHD team is made up of nurses, nutritionists, environmental health specialists, health educators and many other dedicated professionals with a common goal to deliver vital public health services.

Panhandle Health District is one of seven health districts in the state of Idaho.