

Special thanks to:

The Maine Healthy Beaches Program

[www.mainehealthybeaches.org](http://www.mainehealthybeaches.org)

Information contained in this document  
provided by:



The United States

Environmental Protection Agency

<http://www.epa.gov/beaches/>



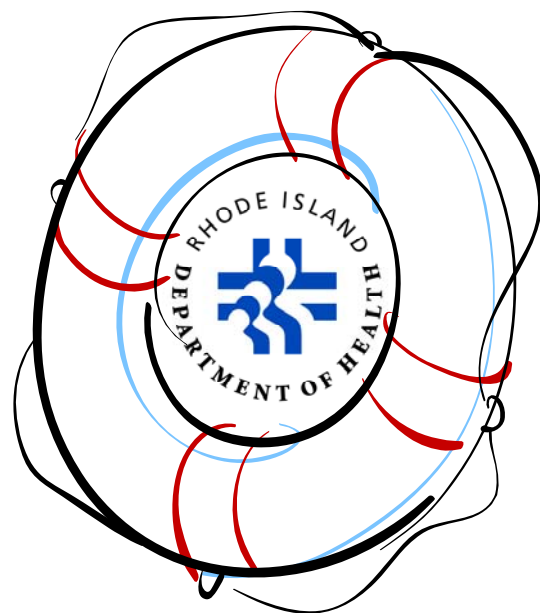
Rhode Island  
Department of Health

Three Capitol Hill  
Providence, RI 02908  
Phone (401) 222-7727  
Fax (401) 222-4775

[www.ribeaches.org](http://www.ribeaches.org)

Printed on 100% Recycled Paper

# Safe Swimming In the *Ocean State*



Rhode Island  
Department of  
Health

**BEACH PROGRAM**

[www.ribeaches.org](http://www.ribeaches.org)

## Beach Program Mission

The mission of the Rhode Island Department of Health's (HEALTH) Beach Program is to protect the public from illness associated with swimming in contaminated bathing waters. The Beach Program achieves this goal by licensing recreational bathing beaches throughout the state under the authority of the General Laws of Rhode Island. We further this mission by assisting beach owners and managers with finding and eliminating sources of contamination.



## LIVING SAFE AND HEALTHY LIVES IN SAFE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

The State of Rhode Island has over 400 miles of coastline containing 115 licensed beaches.

During the summer months some of our beaches may see 10,000 visitors in a single day. In order to keep our beaches clean and safe it is important for you and your family to do your part in eliminating pollution and preventing illness.

The following information is meant to provide guidance on ways you can help keep Rhode Island beaches clean and safe. For more information please visit our website at [www.ribeaches.org](http://www.ribeaches.org)



Rhode Island  
Department of Health

Three Capitol Hill  
Providence, RI 02908  
Phone (401) 222-7727  
Fax (401) 222-4775

[www.ribeaches.org](http://www.ribeaches.org)

# What You Can Do when visiting the Beach

---

- Reduce, reuse and recycle the things you take to the beach – don't leave them there
- Throw away your trash and pet waste — use public trash containers at the beach or take it home with you.
- Use public restrooms.
- Pick up trash.
- Cut the rings off plastic six-pack holders so that animals (like fish, turtles or seals) can't get tangled in them — leave no solid plastic loops.
- Join local beach, river or stream clean ups.
- Dispose of boat sewage in onshore sanitary facilities instead of dumping it into the water.
- Don't disturb wildlife and plants - you're visiting their home.



## What You Can Do as a Home Owner

---

- Regularly maintain your septic system.
- Use natural substances like compost to fertilize gardens and lawns. If you must use fertilizers or pesticides, read the label and use as little as possible.
- Always use native plants when gardening and landscaping to reduce invasive species and minimize resource use.
- Throw trash in proper containers; don't leave it on the ground because it can be swept up by runoff and carried to the beach.
- Don't throw motor oil in storm drains; recycle it at your local service shop

## Illness Associated with Recreational Swimming

---

Children, the elderly, and people with weakened immune systems are most likely to develop illnesses or infections after coming into contact with polluted water, usually while swimming. The most common illness is gastroenteritis, an inflammation of the stomach and the intestines that can cause symptoms like vomiting, headaches, and fever. Other minor illnesses include ear, eye, nose, and throat infections

Fortunately, while swimming-related illnesses are unpleasant, they are usually not very serious - they require little or no treatment or get better quickly upon treatment, and they have no long-term health effects. In very polluted water, however, swimmers can sometimes be exposed to more serious diseases like dysentery, hepatitis, cholera, and typhoid fever.



Most swimmers are exposed to waterborne pathogens when they swallow the water. People can get some infections simply from getting polluted water on their skin or in their eyes. In rare cases, swimmers can develop

illnesses or infections if an open wound is exposed to polluted water.

Not all illnesses from a day at the beach are from swimming. Food poisoning from improperly refrigerated picnic lunches may also have some of the same symptoms as swimming-related illnesses, including stomachache, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

It is also possible that people may come into contact with harmful chemicals in beach waters during or after major storms, especially if they swim near what we call “outfalls,” where sewer lines drain into the water.

\*Please Note: The Department of Health discourages swimming and other full body contact activities north of Conimicut Point. These waters are directly affected by pollution inputs due to heavy rains and discharges from area wastewater treatment facilities. Water contact should be avoided for a minimum of 3 days after heavy rainfall.

