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For Immediate Release



What are the signs telling you?

The Regional Municipality of York begins 2010 Beach Sampling Program

NEWMARKET – The Regional Municipality of York monitors water quality at various public bathing beaches in York Region during the summer months to ensure that water quality is safe for swimming.

From June 15 until the end of August, a minimum of five water samples are collected and tested weekly from various York Region beaches.

Permanent metal signs advising the public whether or not the water is safe for swimming are found at each of the beaches sampled by York Region. Below are pictures and explanations for the types of signs that may be posted:

<p>Blue Sign</p> <p>This sign indicates it is safe to swim in the water unless there has been a heavy rainfall within the last 48 hours. Bacteria levels in the water tend to increase after a heavy rainfall and may pose a risk to your health.</p>	
<p>Red sign</p> <p>This sign indicates the level of bacteria in the water is high enough to cause a greater risk of illness and may pose a risk to your health.</p> <p>High levels of bacteria can cause skin, ear, eye, nose and throat infections, as well as stomach disorders.</p> <p>York Region advises not to go into the water when you see this sign.</p>	

There are many factors that contribute to higher levels of bacteria in our beach water, including:

- Seasonal and storm surface run-off into rivers and lakes
- Agriculture manure and feedlot run-off
- Domestic pet waste run-off
- Sewer overflows and malfunctioning private sewage disposal systems
- Large population of waterfowl
- Warm water temperatures
- Boating waste

Below is a list of tips to help keep local beaches open and safe for swimming:

- Avoid attracting animals or birds to beaches by feeding them
- Avoid the water if you have an infection or open wound
- If you own a pet, please observe local "stoop and scoop" bylaws and remove their waste from municipal streets, public parks and private property
- Practice pollution-free boating by disposing of human wastes hygienically
- If you are planning an addition to your home, contact your local building department to ensure that plumbing fixtures are properly connected to municipal sanitary sewer pipes or your private sewage disposal system
- Upgrade and keep your private sewage disposal system in good working order
- In agricultural communities, fence livestock away from streams and provide them with alternate water sources
- Ensure that run-off from feedlots and manure piles is properly maintained

To learn more about your favourite beach or for more information on the 2010 Beach Sampling Program, please contact **York Region Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653 or TTY 1-866-252-9933** or visit www.york.ca/beaches

For more information on The Regional Municipality of York, please visit www.york.ca

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