



Thinking about swimming today?

Swimming in natural water can be refreshing and exciting, especially at Ottawa's supervised beaches. However, open water has risks to consider, like bacteria from wildlife, weather conditions, and hidden hazards. It's important to be aware of these risks to ensure a safe and enjoyable time.

Know the risks before swimming

- **Severe weather:** Lightning, high winds, and heavy rain can be dangerous.
- **Heavy rain:** Rain can wash contaminants into the water, making it more likely to have high levels of bacteria.
- **Beach conditions:** Many birds, dead fish, algae, or garbage may make the water more likely to have high levels of bacteria.
- **Cloudy water:** High winds and waves can make the water cloudy, hiding hazards and stirring up bacteria.
- **Cuts or open wounds:** Bacteria can infect open cuts or wounds.

Protect your health during and after swimming

- **Before swimming:** Take children to the toilet to reduce contamination.
- **During swimming:** Keep your head above water and avoid swallowing it.
- **After swimming:** Wash hands with soap or use hand sanitizer, shower, and dry your ears.

Beach water monitoring

What is it?

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) monitors water quality by taking water samples at supervised beaches during the summer months.

Samples are analyzed by the Provincial Public Health Laboratory to check for *E. coli* bacteria. High levels of *E. coli* over 200/per 100ml can indicate the presence of other harmful organisms, which can increase the risk of getting sick from the water.

Change from daily to weekly testing

Starting in 2025, OPH will collect water samples weekly instead of daily. This change is in line with the approach taken by most public health units in Ontario and the National Capital Commission.

Why the change?

Results from daily samples take 18 to 24 hours to process, and do not reflect current conditions. By focusing on current conditions (weather, cloudy water), you can make a more informed decision about swimming.

For more information about staying safe at Ottawa beaches visit:
OttawaPublicHealth.ca/Beaches or scan the QR code.

