



High bacteria counts have left Prospect Park beach in Acton unsafe for swimming every week this summer— except for two.

Photo by Ted Brown

## Life's no beach at Fairy Lake this summer

Area residents hoping to beat the heat with a cool dip in Fairy Lake at Acton's Prospect Park beach have been warned not to every week, but twice, so far this summer.

The Halton Region Health Department tests recreational water throughout Halton weekly from the first week of June to the last week of August.

Water samples taken at the Acton beach have shown unacceptable levels of bacteria nearly 80 per cent of the time from June 1-Aug 3. The high bacteria count means the beach has not been safe for swimming every week this summer— except when tests were taken June 22 and Aug 3.

Health Department staff collect a minimum of five water samples from each beach at least once a week to assess water quality.

These samples are analyzed by The Provincial Public Health Laboratory for E.coli bacteria. E. coli is found in the intestines and feces of all warm-blooded animals. It is used as an indicator of fecal pollution. The results of the water samples indicate the quality of the beach water at the time the beach was sampled.

A beach is considered unsafe for swimming if water sample results indicate that the average level of E. coli is higher than the provincial guideline of

100 E.coli / 100mL of water.

To alert bathers to the potential of a higher than normal risk of infection, a warning sign is posted advising the users that the water may be unsafe for swimming. Postings are removed once sample results indicate the levels of bacteria are within acceptable limits.

Some factors that influence the amount of E. coli in the water include:

- Seasonal and storm surface run-off into rivers and lakes
- Pet waste run-off
- Large populations of waterfowl
- Warm water temperatures
- Malfunctioning private sewage disposal systems
- Sewage treatment plant by-passes,
- Sewer overflows
- Agricultural manure run-off

Residents can call Halton Region to find out which beaches have been posted as unsafe for swimming due to poor water quality. Beach water quality information is available 24 hours a day by dialing 311 or calling 905-825-6000, toll free 1-866-442-5866, or TTY 905-827-9983. During regular business hours ask for beach information, and after regular business hours press 2 for health information.

Information is updated weekly and also posted on Halton Region's website at [www.halton.ca](http://www.halton.ca).

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