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Beating the heat

Two-year-old Kyla Hughes enjoys the Rotary Park Splash Zone with mom Sharon Wednesday. The splash pad is a great way to beat the heat and humidity these days.

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Kelso Lake deemed unsafe for swimming due to high bacteria

By MELANIE HENNESSEY

The Champion

For the first time since 1996, Kelso Lake has been deemed unsafe for swimming due to high bacteria levels in the water.

The bacteria was revealed in water samples taken at Kelso Conservation Area by the Halton Region Health Department Tuesday.

Halton Health Promoter Sharon Little said the levels could have been raised from the recent heavy rain, which can cause turbulence and run-off from nearby agricultural lands. Another water test was being done at press time yesterday in hopes of opening the beach this weekend.

Conservation Halton Marketing Co-ordinator Susan O'Neil said Kelso has maintained such a good track record for water safety because of a bird screen being installed in the beach area and improvements to land use practices upstream, such as keeping livestock away from streams.

"We're hoping that the (bacteria) level is due to recent weather conditions," she said.

Local beaches used for recreational purposes are tested on a weekly basis, or if conditions change.

Ms Little explained that a water sample can have up to 100 colonies of e-coli per 100 ml of water. At Kelso, there were 121 colonies of E. coli.

Conservation Halton said the bacteria can cause ear, nose and throat infections, stomach upsets, skin rashes and diarrhea. Those most susceptible are young children, the elderly and people with depressed immune systems.

Local residents looking to swim elsewhere in Halton this weekend won't have many places to choose from as Kelso is one of six beaches in the region listed as unsafe for swimming. The only beach the health department has deemed safe is Beachway South in Burlington.



File photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Kelso attracts thousands of people to its beach each summer.

The boat rental facilities at Kelso will remain open during the beach closure.

For more on beach closures, call (905) 825-6000 and ask for beach information or press 3 after business hours. Information is also available by visiting www.region.halton.on.ca/health.

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