

KNOW THE FACTS



NEW YORK
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Parks, Recreation
and Historic
Preservation

Swimmer's Itch

Swimmer's Itch is:

- an itchy rash usually caused by an allergic reaction to a parasite found in natural water-bodies. It can last several days, but seldom requires medical treatment.

Swimmer's Itch happens when:

- a parasite of waterfowl and some animals penetrates the skin of a human. The parasite dies soon, but can irritate the skin.

Signs of Swimmer's Itch are:

- a tingling sensation as the water evaporates and the parasite penetrates the skin.
- raised, reddened bumps, usually on the lower legs but sometimes on the abdomen or arms. It may appear within minutes or days after swimming or wading in water where the parasite is present.
- itching and skin tenderness shortly after exposure, which subside for 10 to 15 hours and then grow more intense.
- intense itching that goes away in about a week.

Prevent Swimmer's Itch by:

- toweling off thoroughly right after leaving the water.
- showering after swimming in fresh and salt water.
- not feeding ducks, which can contribute to the spread of the parasite that causes swimmers itch.
- avoiding muddy or weedy spots when swimming in a lake.
- seeing that children do not allow lake water to dry on the skin.
- taking special care during late spring and early summer.

If you get Swimmer's Itch:

- please contact the park office.
- if the reaction seems too severe, contact a physician.

For further information:

- about health aspects of Swimmer's Itch, contact your physician, your local health department or the NYS Department of Health.