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USE CAUTION WHEN SWIMMING IN PONDS, STREAMS AND LAKES

With summer heat, getting cooled off by swimming in ponds, streams and lakes sounds like a great way to enjoy a hot afternoon. Be aware that even if this water looks clean, unless it is tested the water may contain disease-causing microorganisms that you cannot see or smell. In fact, the most frequent sources of pollution – sewage overflows, polluted storm water runoff, boating wastes and malfunctioning septic systems –are impossible to see.

Your Fairfield Department of Health wants residents to take precautions when swimming and recreating in area creeks, ponds and lakes – especially after a heavy rain. “Fecal matter is often flushed into creeks, lakes and ponds, and increases the possibility of disease causing organisms being present in the water,” states FDH Administrator Larry Hanna. “Keep in mind that you are not swimming in a swimming pool that has chlorinated and filtered water. Even if your pond or lake has low bacteria counts, there is still a risk that you could come in contact with something that could make you ill.”

Swimming or playing in unsafe water may result in minor illness such as sore throats or diarrhea, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It also might result in more serious illnesses. Children, the elderly and people with weakened immune systems have a greater chance of getting sick when they come in contact with contaminated water.

The Fairfield Department of Health recommends that if you do swim in ponds, creeks or lakes, you try not to get any pond or lake water in your mouth, and be sure to wash your hands after swimming and prior to handling food.

If you think your pond or beach water is contaminated contact private water testing companies who will test for E. coli counts in your pond or lake, and for specific instructions about the water testing process. For a list of Certified to Perform Microbiological Analyses go to <http://www.epa.ohio.gov/portals/28/documents/labcert/microlabs.pdf> It is important to know about suspected water contamination so you can protect loved ones from exposure.