

MEDIA RELEASE

July 13, 2026

Safe Swimming Starts with You: Check Beach Conditions Before Entering the Water

As residents and visitors head to local beaches this summer, CK Public Health is reminding everyone that beach water testing results are only one piece of information, and that beachgoers themselves are the best judge of whether conditions are safe for swimming.

“Water quality can change quickly due to weather, waves, runoff, wildlife, and other environmental conditions,” said Dr. Shanker Nesathurai, Medical Officer of Health for CK Public Health. “A water sample provides a snapshot of conditions at the exact moment it was collected, however, water quality can change within hours. Before entering the water, people should look at current conditions and make an informed decision for themselves and their families.”

Each summer, from June to September, CK Public Health collects water samples from public beaches and tests for E. Coli bacteria. E. Coli is one of the microorganisms that can cause gastrointestinal disease with associated nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. However, the results reflect only the conditions present at the time of sampling and cannot reliably predict what conditions will be later that day or the next day.

CK Public Health encourages beachgoers to assess real-time conditions before entering the water:

- Has there been heavy rainfall in the last 24 to 48 hours?
- Have conditions been windy or wavy in the last 24 to 48 hours?
- When you arrive at the beach, are there a large number of dead fish?
- When you arrive at the beach, are there many birds – either dead or alive?
- Does the water look like there is a lot of algae or scum?
- Is the water so cloudy that you cannot see your feet when standing at adult waist depth?

If the answer is **yes** to any of these questions, swimming is not recommended because level of risk may be elevated and could increase the risk of you getting sick.

While water testing remains an important public health tool, relying solely on a test result can create a false sense of security.

“People sometimes assume a beach is safe because a recent test showed acceptable results,” said Dr. Nesathurai. “The reality is that conditions can change rapidly. Beach water testing is helpful, but your own observations of current conditions are often the most important factor in deciding whether to swim.”

Beach closures are rare and generally occur only when there are significant concerns such as sewage spills, blue-green algae blooms, fish die-offs, or serious safety hazards.

Residents can learn more about beach safety, beach water testing, and current beach information by visiting ckphu.com/beaches.

-30-

Media Contact:

Jacquie Cartwright

Community Outreach & Public Relations Officer, CK Public Health

P: 519-352-7270 ext 4247

ckphucommunications@chatham-kent.ca