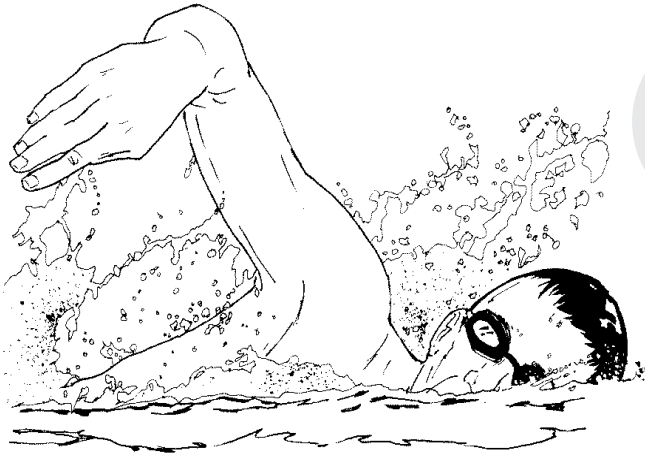


SWIMMER'S ITCH



Swimmer's itch is a skin reaction caused by a parasite that enters the top layer of skin. After the parasite, which is a larval stage of certain flatworms, enters the skin it dies, causing red itchy spots to appear at the site where parasite entered. The parasite typically chooses birds or waterfowl as their hosts. However, you can contract the parasite from the water. The larval stage of the parasite's life is spent inhabiting certain species of snails, where they develop and reproduce in the snail's internal

organs. Although it is widely scattered throughout Michigan, large outbreaks occur in northern lakes of the Lower Peninsula. Here are some tips for how to avoid swimmer's itch and what to do if you do contract it:

What can be done to prevent or to reduce swimmer's itch?

- Avoid swimming or wading in shallow water for long periods of time.
- Towel off immediately after getting out of the water. This may reduce swimmer's itch by preventing certain species of the parasite from entering the skin as it dries.
- Do not encourage birds to stay in your area by feeding them. An onshore wind can send parasite infested bird feces into the swimming area.
- Avoid swimming in places where swimmer's itch has been an annual problem.
- Post signs on the beach to warn neighbors or fellow swimmers where swimmer's itch occurs annually.

What should you do if you do contract swimmer's itch?

- If a mild reaction occurs, Ken-tox is an over-the-counter cream that provides itch relief. A reaction will typically occur within 48 hours and can last up to seven days.
- If the reaction appears to be severe, seek medical attention. A topical cream can be prescribed to relieve the itch and swelling.

For more information about swimmer's itch ... ask your pharmacist!

