Water safety reminders

Source: Amanda Gumbert, extension water quality specialist, Kentucky Department for Public Health, Kentucky Division of Water

There is nothing like cooling off with a day at the lake or nothing as relaxing as going fishing. As you enjoy Kentucky’s wonderful waterways this summer, remember to take measures to stay healthy.

While many of our waterways are safe to swim in or eat fish from, some are not due to unsafe levels of pollutants and bacteria. It is important to check water quality advisories before heading to your favorite waterway for recreation. You can see the latest advisories for swimming, fishing and harmful algal blooms on the Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet’s website <https://eec.ky.gov/Environmental-Protection/Water/Pages/Advisory.aspx>. Do not swim in or consume fish from rivers, lakes, ponds, creeks or streams with an advisory.

Any waterway in which you spend time can potentially affect your health. If you come in contact with contaminated water, you may experience symptoms like gastrointestinal issues, skin rashes, respiratory issues or eye or ear infections. If you experience these symptoms or suspect you have come in contact with water pollutants, contact your primary care physician.

To minimize your risk of getting a water-related illness, the Kentucky Department for Public Health and Kentucky Division of Water recommend you avoid ingesting or inhaling water. When you leave for the day, make sure you thoroughly wash your hands and any other body parts that came in contact with water. Do not put open wounds in the water, as it could cause the wound to get an infection. Do not get in water that smells bad or has surface scum. Avoid getting in water after a heavy rain event, especially in dense residential, urban or agricultural areas. Steer clear of waterways located below wastewater treatment facility outfalls, animal feedlots, straight pipes or other obvious pollution sources.

Also pay close attention to the water your pets and livestock consume. Do not let them drink from water sources with a bright green or blue surface scum. It can cause them to experience gastrointestinal issues. Keep your livestock from loafing in ponds or other waterways. Their urine and feces contaminate the water. Consuming this water can give them gastrointestinal issues. It can also lead to a fish kill.

More information on water quality and water safety is available at the (COUNTY NAME) office of the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service.

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