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# News Release

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## Play in the Water --- But Play It Safe

**BREMERTON, WA** — As summer vacation begins for schools around the county, the Health District reminds families to take simple precautions at the beach to keep kids safe. Children are at risk whenever they are in or near the water.

One hazard is drowning. Three Kitsap youngsters have died by drowning over the last three years. The Health District reminds adults to take some simple precautions:

- **Make life jackets a “must”.** Make sure kids wear life jackets in and around the water --- even if they know how to swim.
- **Keep your eyes on them.** Supervise children at all times around beaches and lakes. To make it easier, designate one adult to be the Water Watcher if others want to prepare food, talk, or play. Trade off, but be clear about who the Watcher is at all times.

Two Kitsap parks will have Life Jacket Loaner boards this summer. Buck Lake Park in Hansville and Horseshoe Lake Park in South Kitsap will host free kiosks where parents can borrow jackets to protect kids while wading and swimming. The Loaner Program is sponsored by Kitsap Safe Kids and maintained by staff from local fire departments.

Waterborne illness can also be a risk. Throughout the summer, the Health District will be monitoring bacteria levels at swimming beaches and other access areas at 17 lakes and nine saltwater locations in Kitsap County. Sample results will be compared with federal standards to determine if these areas are safe for swimming. Warning signs will be posted at swimming areas when there’s an increased risk of waterborne illness from high bacteria levels.

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Swimmer's itch and toxic blue green algae exposure are also of concern at some freshwater beaches. To help prevent swimmer's itch, use waterproof sunscreen before swimming and shower or vigorously towel dry immediately after leaving the water.

Potentially toxic blue green algae blooms are also a common occurrence in some local lakes. If a bloom is encountered, avoid swallowing lake water and avoid swimming and other water contact sports in areas with concentrated algae blooms. Current beach closures, lake advisories, and shellfish harvesting advisories are available by calling the Health District's hotline 1-800-2BE-WELL (1-800-223-9355), or online at [www.kitsapcountyhealth.com](http://www.kitsapcountyhealth.com).

The public is also advised to report any cases of waterborne illness to the Health District so others can be warned. To report a waterborne illness, swimmer's itch, an algal bloom, or to ask questions about the beach monitoring program, call the Health District at (360) 337-5235, Monday through Friday, between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

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