



Health and Human Services MEDIA RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sept. 29, 2016

‘No Swim’ advisory issued for multiple Sarasota County area Beaches

SARASOTA COUNTY — As a precaution, Sarasota County health officials have issued a “No Swim” advisory at:

- Longboat Key, 3495 Gulf of Mexico Drive, Longboat Key, FL 34228
- Siesta Beach, 948 Beach Road, Siesta Key, FL 34242
- Turtle Beach, 8919 Midnight Pass Road, Sarasota, FL 34242
- Nokomis Beach, 100 Casey Key Road, Casey Key, Nokomis, FL 34275
- North Jetty, 1000 Casey Key Road, Casey Key, Nokomis, FL 34275

The amount of enterococcus bacteria found during water quality testing on Wednesday, Sept. 28 was outside acceptable limits. The beaches remain open. Wading, swimming and water recreation is not recommended as long as there is an advisory. At the same time Red Tide Advisory signs are posted at all Sarasota County beaches due to a red tide bloom off the coast. People are encouraged to read the signage and heed flags when present at area beaches.

Some bacteria are naturally present in the environment. However, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has found a link between health and water quality. Signage advising the public not to swim or engage in water recreation at Longboat Key, Siesta, Turtle, Nokomis and North Jetty Beaches will stay in place until follow-up water testing results meet the EPA’s recreational water quality standard. The Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County (DOH-Sarasota) expects to have the next round of test results available on Friday, Sept. 30.

Enterococcus bacteria can come from a variety of natural and man-made sources. These include pet waste, livestock, birds, wildlife (land-dwelling and marine), stormwater runoff, and human sewage from failed septic systems and sewage spills.

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MEDIA NOTES:

DOH-Sarasota Media Contact:

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Website: www.sarasotahealth.org



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The rapid response teams from Sarasota County and Town of Longboat Key have determined that the cause of the elevated bacteria levels is likely due to natural sources. The current red tide algae bloom at these beaches has resulted in wrack lines containing numerous dead fish and marine organisms. These wrack lines provide food for shorebirds and wildlife which can contribute to these elevated readings. Recent rains in the area that wash accumulated pollutants, including bacteria from birds, pet feces, and wildlife into local waters are also an important factor.

DOH-Sarasota Environmental Administrator Tom Higginbotham emphasizes that the Florida Healthy Beaches program protects beach goers when conditions are unsuitable for swimming. We do this by testing beach water and providing up-to-date explanations of the results.

“When these bacteria are found at high levels in recreational waters, there is a risk that some people may become ill. People especially those who are very young, elderly or who have a weak immune system who swallow water while swimming can get stomach or intestinal illnesses. If water comes in contact with a cut or sore, people can get infections or rashes.” says Higginbotham.

Local health officials emphasize that beaches remain open. However, residents and visitors are urged not to wade, swim or engage in water recreation at Longboat Key, Siesta, Turtle, Nokomis and North Jetty Beaches until the advisory is lifted. In addition, you should not eat shellfish such as crabs and shrimp collected in the immediate area of Longboat Key, Siesta, Turtle, Nokomis, and North Jetty Beaches. Finfish caught live and healthy can be eaten if filleted.

“Our coastline of over 30 miles of world-class beaches is a wonderful asset to our community,” says Virginia Haley, president of Visit Sarasota County. “Let’s work together to help preserve this amenity.”

To help keep beach water safe for swimming and recreation, do not allow pets to roam on beaches and in park areas and pick up pet waste. Additionally, children in diapers and people of all ages with diarrhea should not go into the water.

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Testing has revealed bacteria levels within acceptable limits at the following area beaches:

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| North Lido Beach | Venice Beach |
| South Lido Park Beach | Venice Fishing Pier |
| Lido Casino Beach | Service Club Beach |
| Bird Key Park (Ringling Causeway) | South Brohard Beach |
| | Caspersen Beach |
| | Manasota Key Beach |
| | Blind Pass Beach |

“It is important to know that our beaches are never closed,” says Haley. “When making beach day plans, be sure to check the latest reports on beach conditions and read beach condition signs at beach entrance ways. The signs are also posted on lifeguard stands when present.”

For more information:

- Visit <https://ourgulfenvironment.scgov.net> and click on water monitoring and then bacterial testing to check beach water testing results of area Gulf beaches.
- Call 941-BEACHES (941-232-2437) or visit www.visitbeaches.org. Click on the same link to the mobile-friendly version of the beach conditions report.
- The local visitor and convention bureau known as Visit Sarasota County also provides extensive information about the Sarasota area, including its beaches. The website is www.visitsarasota.org.

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About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

Follow us on Twitter at [@HealthyFla](#) and on [Facebook](#). For more information about the Florida Department of Health please visit www.FloridaHealth.gov.

For more information, visit www.sarasotahealth.org or call 941-861-2900.



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Sarasota County prohibits discrimination in all services, programs or activities.
View the complete policy at www.scgov.net/ADA/Pages/default.aspx

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DOH-Sarasota Media Contact: A news release will be issued when the advisory is lifted
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Our Gulf Environment website: <https://ourgulfenvironment.scgov.net>



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