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FLORIDA HEALTHY BEACHES

Lower Beach Action Values to prompt advisory.



Contact:

Communications Office

Press50@flhealth.gov 561-671-4014

Palm Beach County, FL— With the New Year the Florida Department of Health (DOH) is adopting new water quality criteria for use in the Healthy Beaches Program. These criteria reflect the most current, Recreational Water Quality Criteria (RWQ criteria), recommendations and water quality grant requirements by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA).

Department of Health staff in Palm Beach County samples the beach waters at 13 locations from Boca Raton to Jupiter for enterococci bacteria as recommended by the USEPA and a value assigned to indicate poor, moderate or good ranges. High levels of bacteria can indicate an increased risk of gastrointestinal illness.

Findings from recent epidemiological studies indicate that disease risks from water with high bacteria levels are somewhat higher than previously thought. The new Bacteria Action Value that now prompts a **No Swimming Advisory** has been lowered from 104 or greater Enterococci CFU (Colony Forming Unit) per 100 ml of marine water to 71 or greater Enterococci CFU per 100 ml. It is expected that swimmers will experience less illness by adhering to the advisory at the new lower standard. It is estimated that 36 of 1,000 people get ill from exposure to water with bacterial counts at or greater than 70 CFU per 100 ml.

Under the original standard beach sampling in Palm Beach County resulted in an advisory being posted less than five percent of the time. With the new standard it is expected the number of advisories will increase to about eight percent.

Beach water quality for Palm Beach County and throughout the state can be found at www.flhealthpalmbeach.org and click on “beach water quality”.

*A Poor rating may result in a resampling event to confirm poor conditions; otherwise a Health Advisory will be issued immediately. These indicate that contact with the water at this site may pose increased risk of infectious disease, particularly for susceptible individuals

Beach Action Values (BAV) Enterococcus Results Description

GOOD	MODERATE	POOR* (unsatisfactory)
0-35 Enterococci CFU per 100 ml of marine water	36-70 Enterococci CFU per 100 ml of marine water	71 or greater Enterococci CFU per 100 ml of marine water 36 or greater Enterococci CFU per 100 ml of marine water as a geometric mean over a five week period

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