

## Treatment

An oral antihistamine may help to relieve the itching.

Also, an over-the-counter topical 1% cortisone skin cream or sting aid may be helpful.

Always follow the dosage and application direction before using the above mentioned medications.

***For severe reactions or complications, call your physician immediately.***



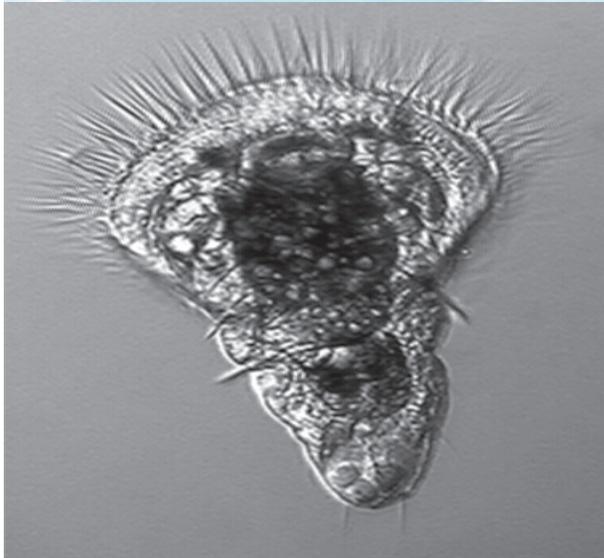
This information is provided by  
Ocean Lifeguards of  
Palm Beach County

and the

Florida Department of Health  
Palm Beach County

Division of Epidemiology and  
Disease Control

800 Clematis St.  
West Palm Beach, FL 33401  
(561)671-4184



# SEA LICE



## What is “Sea Lice”?

“Sea Lice” is a condition that has been documented along 250 miles of Florida’s southern Atlantic coast since the 1900s. Scientifically referred to as Sea Bather’s Eruption. After a 20 year absence, the problem reappeared in the mid-1980s and studies were conducted. It has been determined that the peak months for complaints about this rash



are March through August. Outbreaks have intensified and

become more severe over the years, as reflected by the number of cases reported. Sea Lice appears to be caused by shifts in the ocean currents, the highest incidence are in Palm Beach and North Broward counties, where the Gulf Stream passes closest to shore.

## Causes and Symptoms

The term “sea lice” was inappropriately coined by residents; in reality, it is caused by miniature jellyfish larvae trapped under bathing suits when in the water.

If pressure occurs from exercising, surf boards, lying on the beach, etc., stinging cells are released causing itching, irritation and welts. The larvae also have an affinity for hair, which could explain why people have lesions on their necks from hair dangling in the water and then contacting the skin. ***It should be noted that this condition has no relation to head lice, which are common among young children.*** Though some people do experience a “prickling” sensation while in the water, itching usually starts several hours after being in the ocean and lasts 2 – 4 days, but can last as long as two weeks. Some people



may have more severe reactions such as: headache, fever, nausea and infected blisters. Children may develop high fever.

## Prevention

Do not swim when “sea lice” are present, especially if you have been

affected in the past. ***(Always check Lifeguard posting)***

Swimmers should avoid wearing T-shirts; protection from the sun can be achieved with sunscreen, which may also reduce contact with the larvae.

Shower immediately after swimming in the ocean, making sure your bathing suit is removed before showering; this may reduce your risk for “sea lice”.

Bathing suits should be thoroughly washed with detergent and heat dried after use not air dried.