

Choosing where to swim and collect shellfish in Southland



We are lucky enough to have some wonderful spots in Southland to swim and gather shellfish. But we all need to be aware of the bacteria which affects water quality and can make us sick (stomach upsets).

This type of bacteria gets into our waterways through human and animal waste. This can be from sewage, septic tank discharge, farming run-off, industrial pollution and boats. Environment Southland monitors popular swimming and shellfish gathering spots and we put the results on our online mapping service, Beacon www.es.govt.nz/swimming-and-shellfish.

Where do we monitor?

Monitoring sites are located at:

- ▶ 13 beaches
- ▶ 7 rivers
- ▶ 8 shellfish gathering sites

What do we look for?

We take samples to look for 'indicator' bacteria. Although they may not make you sick themselves, these bacteria tend to indicate the presence of pathogens (such as viruses and protozoa). We don't test for the pathogens themselves as this is expensive and generally takes a lot longer. In rivers and lakes we test for *E.coli*, at beaches we test for enterococci, and in shellfish waters we test for faecal coliforms.

Our monitoring: Weekly summer testing

Using the National Guidelines for Microbiological Water Quality, we use a 'traffic light' system to categorise swimming sites into three different 'modes'.

- ▶ **Green** – minimal health risk
- ▶ **Amber** – increased health risk
- ▶ **Red** – significant health risk

During summer months we update our swimming information weekly.

Our monitoring: Annual Suitability for Recreation Grading

As well as measuring bacteria levels, we use historical information from previous years, consider what else might affect water quality at the location, and calculate a yearly grade for the site. This is called the Suitability for Recreation Grade (SFRG), and is done at the end of each season so you know what water quality at that site is like in general.

Sites are graded 'very good' (suitable for swimming most of the time), 'good', 'fair', 'poor' and 'very poor'. The risk of becoming sick from swimming at a site increases if it's graded 'poor' or 'very poor' (often unsuitable for swimming).

Shellfish gathering sites

We take water samples monthly from popular shellfish collection sites. We test for the 'indicator' bacteria, faecal coliforms, which can indicate the presence of pathogens that can make shellfish unsuitable for consumption.

Shellfish gathering site results are based on the previous year's monthly water samples, in accordance with the national guidelines for shellfish gathering, and can also be found on our website at www.es.govt.nz/swimming-and-shellfish.

In addition to these results, there are other things that you need to think about before diving in at your favourite swimming spot or heading out to collect shellfish. Go to www.es.govt.nz/smart-tips.

Toxic algae

The toxic algae cyanobacteria can be present in waterways, especially over summer. The toxins are dangerous to humans and animals, and it is not safe to swim in, touch or swallow water when there is a bloom. Keep up to date with toxic algae alerts via our online mapping service, Beacon at www.es.govt.nz/swimming-and-shellfish.

It's important to know what to look for when you are out and about:

- ▶ At rivers look for brown/black slime on rocks and mats on banks.
- ▶ At lakes, look for brown/black mats in the lake and on the shore, or a greenish tinge or greenish globules in the water.

For more information see es.govt.nz/toxic-algae.



▶ **Benthic cyanobacteria can occur in rivers and lakes** (Photo: Cawthron Institute)



▶ **Planktonic cyanobacteria can occur in lakes** (Photo: Cawthron Institute)

Swimming & shellfish gathering sites

Best* beach swimming sites

- ▶ Awarua Bay at the Tiwai pumphouse
- ▶ Colac Bay at Colac Bay Road
- ▶ Halfmoon Bay at Bathing Beach
- ▶ Halfmoon Bay at Elgin Terrace
- ▶ Kawakaputa Bay at Wakapatu Road
- ▶ Monkey Island at Frenzt Road
- ▶ Oreti Beach at Dunns Road
- ▶ Porpoise Bay at the camping ground
- ▶ Riverton Rocks at Mitchells Bay North

Best* freshwater swimming sites

- ▶ Lake Manapouri at Frazers Beach
- ▶ Lake Te Anau at Boat Harbour Beach

Best^ shellfish collection site

- ▶ Riverton Rocks at Mitchells Bay

**These sites all fall into the category of "very good" or "good" according to Suitability for Recreation Grading.*

^ The site that passes national guidelines for shellfish waters.