



**WISCONSIN  
DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH SERVICES**



Communicable  
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## Swimmer's itch

### (cercarial dermatitis, shistosome dermatitis)

AIDS/HIV

Immunization

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Swimmer's itch is a skin rash caused by a parasite (shistosomes) which ordinarily infect birds, semi-aquatic mammals, and snails. Common grackles, red-winged blackbirds, ducks, geese, swans, muskrats, and moles have been found to carry the parasite. As part of their developmental life-cycle, these parasites are released from infected snails, migrate through the water, and are capable of penetrating human skin. After penetration, these parasites remain in the skin and die, but can cause an allergic reaction in some people. The parasite does not mature, reproduce, or cause any permanent infection in humans.

#### General information

[Swimmer's itch fact sheet](#) (PDF, 24 KB) [Hmong](#) (PDF, 26 KB) [Spanish](#) (PDF, 21 KB)

#### Contacts

[Wisconsin Local Health Departments - Regional offices - Tribal agencies](#)

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