



# Health and Human Services MEDIA RELEASE



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Oct. 29, 2015

## ‘No Swim’ advisory issued for Siesta Beach

SARASOTA COUNTY — Sarasota County health officials have issued a precautionary "No Swim" advisory for:

**Siesta Beach - 948 Beach Road, Siesta Key, FL 34242**

The precautionary "No Swim" advisory is due to elevated levels of enterococci (enteric) bacteria, some of which are naturally present in the environment, on Thursday, Oct. 29. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), there is a correlation between the levels of enteric bacteria in recreational waters and human health.

Signage advising the public not to swim or engage in water recreation at Siesta Beach will remain 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, Oct. 30.

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

The rapid response team from Sarasota County has determined that the cause of the elevated bacteria levels is likely due to natural sources. The response team observed a wrack line of decaying algae. Wrack lines, which contain marine algae and a variety of marine organisms that provide food for shorebirds and wildlife, act as natural bacteria reservoirs. Large numbers of shore birds were also observed feeding along the water's edge. High surf conditions associated with recent tropical systems churn up sand from the bottom and can affect water quality. Abnormally high tides and recent heavy rains in the area that wash accumulated pollutants, including bacteria from pet feces, birds, and wildlife into local waters could also be an important factor.

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### **MEDIA NOTES:**

#### **DOH-Sarasota Media Contact:**

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Website: [www.sarasotahealth.org](http://www.sarasotahealth.org)



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DOH-Sarasota Environmental Administrator Tom Higginbotham emphasizes that the Florida Healthy Beaches program protects beachgoers from conditions unsuitable for swimming by sampling beach water and providing accurate and up-to-date explanations of the results.

“When these bacteria are detected in high concentrations in recreational waters, there is a risk that some people who swallow water while swimming or have contact with water entering the skin through a cut or sore may become ill with gastrointestinal illnesses, infections or rashes.” says Higginbotham.

Local health officials emphasize that beaches remain open. However, residents and visitors are urged to take precautions by not wading or swimming in the water or engaging in water recreation at Siesta Beach until the advisory is lifted. In addition, shellfish such as crabs and shrimp collected in the immediate area of Siesta Beach should not be consumed. However, it is safe to fish and consume fin-fish from these waters.

“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, officials say people should not allow pets to roam on beaches and in park areas and pick up pet waste since summer rains tend to wash accumulated pollutants, including bacteria from birds and wildlife into local waterways. Additionally, children in diapers and people of all ages who are experiencing diarrhea should not go into the water.

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

- |                                   |                     |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| North Lido Beach                  | North Jetty Beach   |
| South Lido Park Beach             | Venice Beach        |
| Lido Casino Beach                 | Venice Fishing Pier |
|                                   | Service Club Beach  |
| Bird Key Park (Ringling Causeway) | South Brohard Beach |
| Longboat Key Public Beach         | Caspersen Beach     |
| Turtle Beach                      | Manasota Key Beach  |
| Nokomis Beach                     | Blind Pass Beach    |

“It is important to know that our beaches are never closed. However, it is best to check the latest reports on beach conditions before heading out to the beach,” says Haley.

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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.mote.org/beaches](http://www.mote.org/beaches). 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](http://www.visitsarasota.org).

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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](http://www.scgov.net/ADA/Pages/default.aspx)

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#### **MEDIA NOTES:**

**DOH-Sarasota Media Contact:** *A news release will be issued when the advisory is lifted*  
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Website: [www.sarasotahealth.org](http://www.sarasotahealth.org)  
Our Gulf Environment website: <https://ourgulfenvironment.scgov.net>



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