



# Health and Human Services MEDIA RELEASE



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Sept. 1, 2016

## ‘No Swim’ advisory issued for North Lido, Siesta Beach and Venice Fishing Pier Beach(es)

SARASOTA COUNTY — As a precaution, Sarasota County health officials have issued a “No Swim” advisory at:

- North Lido, 400 Ben Franklin Drive, Lido Key, FL 34236
- Siesta Beach, 948 Beach Road, Siesta Key, FL 34242
- Venice Fishing Pier, 1600 Harbor Drive S., Venice, FL 34285

The amount of enterococcus bacteria found during water quality testing on Wednesday, Aug. 31 was outside acceptable limits. The beach remains open. Wading, swimming and water recreation is not recommended as long as there is an advisory. People are encouraged to read the signage and heed flags when present at area beaches.

Some bacteria are naturally present in the environment. However, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has found a link between health and water quality. Signage advising the public not to swim or engage in water recreation at North Lido, Siesta, and Venice Fishing Pier Beach(es) will stay 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, Sept. 2.

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

**No sewage spills have been reported within one mile of the beach(es) in the past month.**

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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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The rapid response teams from Sarasota County and the city of Venice have determined that the cause of the elevated bacteria levels is likely due to natural sources. Abnormally high tides and recent rains in the area that wash accumulated pollutants, including bacteria from birds, pet feces, and wildlife into local waters are an important factor. Wrack lines of decaying algae were observed along the shoreline of North Lido and Venice Fishing Pier Beach(es). Wrack lines, which contain marine algae and a variety of marine organisms that provide food for shorebirds and wildlife act as natural bacteria reservoirs. The response teams also observed a large amount of bird activity along the shoreline of all three beaches which can contribute to these elevated readings. In addition, higher surf conditions associated with the storms churn up sand from the bottom and can affect water quality.

DOH-Sarasota Environmental Administrator Tom Higginbotham emphasizes that the Florida Healthy Beaches program protects beach goers when conditions are unsuitable for swimming. We do this by testing beach water and providing up-to-date explanations of the results.

“When these bacteria are found at high levels in recreational waters, there is a risk that some people may become ill. People especially those who are very young, elderly or who have a weak immune system who swallow water while swimming can get stomach or intestinal illnesses. If water comes in contact with a cut or sore, people can get infections or rashes.” says Higginbotham.

Local health officials emphasize that beaches remain open. However, residents and visitors are urged not to wade, swim or engage in water recreation at North Lido, Siesta, Venice Fishing Pier Beach(es) until the advisory is lifted. In addition, you should not eat shellfish such as crabs and shrimp collected in the immediate area of North Lido, Siesta and Venice Fishing Pier Beach(es). However, it is safe to fish and eat 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, do not allow pets to roam on beaches and in park areas and pick up pet waste. Additionally, children in diapers and people of all ages with diarrhea should not go into the water.

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

South Lido Park Beach  
Lido Casino Beach

North Jetty Beach  
Venice Beach

Bird Key Park (Ringling Causeway)  
Longboat Key Public Beach  
Turtle Beach  
Nokomis Beach

Service Club Beach  
South Brohard Beach  
Caspersen Beach  
Manasota Key Beach  
Blind Pass Beach

“It is important to know that our beaches are never closed,” says Haley. “When making beach day plans, be sure to check the latest reports on beach conditions and read beach condition signs at beach entrance ways. The signs are also posted on lifeguard stands when present.”

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.visitbeaches.org](http://www.visitbeaches.org). 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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## About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

Follow us on Twitter at [@HealthyFla](#) and on [Facebook](#). For more information about the Florida Department of Health please visit [www.FloridaHealth.gov](http://www.FloridaHealth.gov).

For more information, visit [www.sarasotahealth.org](http://www.sarasotahealth.org) or call 941-861-2900.



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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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**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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