

## Epi Update for Friday, July 21, 2023

CENTER FOR ACUTE DISEASE EPIDEMIOLOGY (CADE)  
BUREAU OF HIV, STD, AND HEPATITIS

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Items for this week's Epi Update include

- **Tips for mpox specimen collection**
- **Swimmer's itch: Symptoms, treatment, prevention**
- **Infographic: Cercarial Dermatitis**

### **Tips for mpox specimen collection**

No cases of mpox have been reported in Iowa since January 2023, but there has been a slight uptick in cases and clusters this summer around the United States. Mpox activity is significantly lower nationally than last summer's peak, however.

SHL continues to offer mpox PCR testing with no preapproval required. However, adequate collection of specimens from lesions is critical to achieve accurate diagnostic results.

Here are some tips for health care providers performing mpox testing:

- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Select two lesions to swab, preferably from different locations on the body or from lesions that differ in appearance.
- Collect one swab from each lesion.
- Vigorously swab each lesion using sufficient force to assure adequate viral DNA is collected.
- Place the swabs in separate tubes. Although dry swabs or swabs in viral transport media (VTM) are both acceptable, swabs in VTM have performed better at SHL.
- Prior to collection, moistening the swab with sterile viral transport media may facilitate collecting sufficient viral material.

For test request forms and specimen guidelines for mpox testing at SHL, visit [www.shl.uiowa.edu/testmenu/menupages/mpox.xml](http://www.shl.uiowa.edu/testmenu/menupages/mpox.xml).

For more information about mpox, including weekly national case counts, visit [www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/index.html).

### **Swimmer's itch: Symptoms, treatment, prevention**

Swimmer's itch, also called cercarial dermatitis, appears as a skin rash caused by an allergic reaction to certain microscopic parasites that infect some birds and mammals. While the parasite's preferred host is the specific bird or mammal, if the parasite comes into contact with a swimmer, it burrows into the skin causing an allergic reaction and rash.

Within minutes to days after swimming in contaminated water, you may experience tingling, burning, or itching of the skin. Small reddish pimples appear within twelve hours. Pimples may develop into small blisters. Scratching the areas may result in secondary bacterial infections.

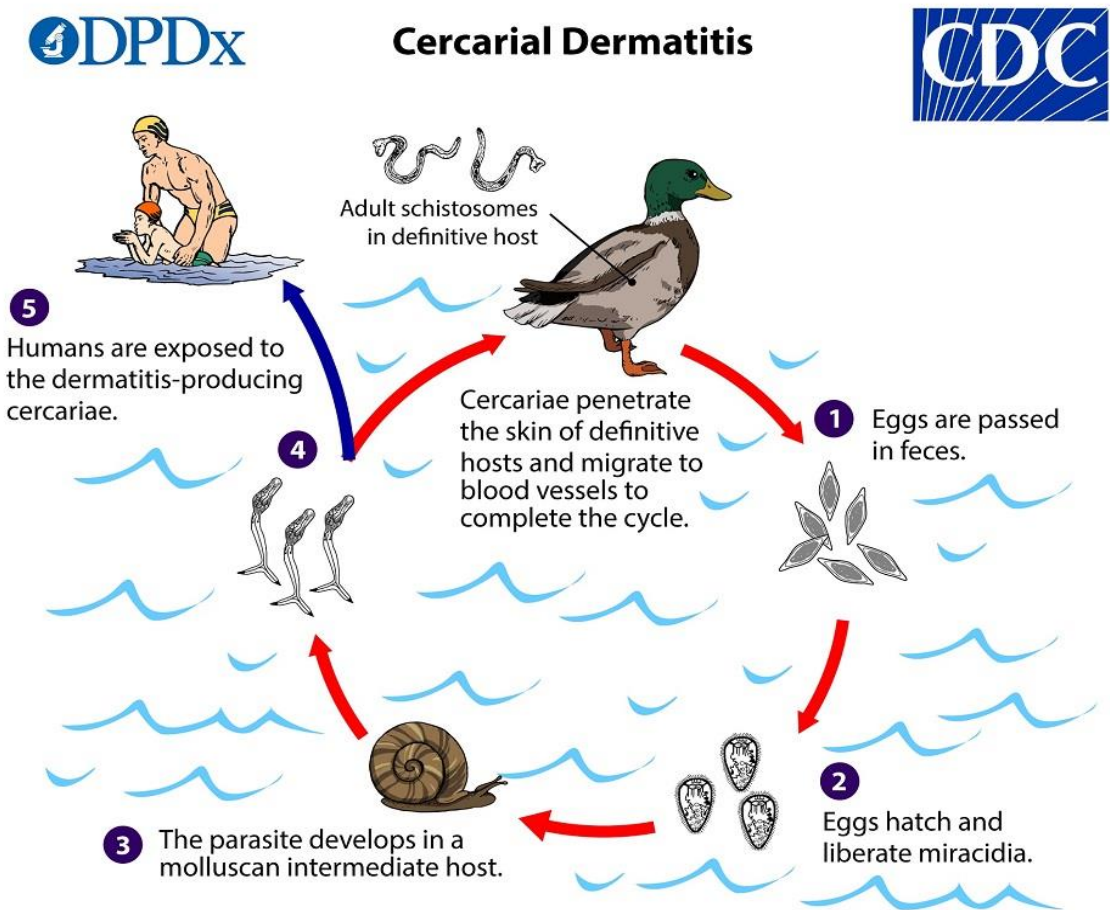
The welts and itching can last for several days to about a week and usually don't require a visit to the doctor. An antihistamine along with calamine lotion can be used to treat the affected areas. If itching is severe, your health care provider may suggest prescription-strength lotions or creams to lessen your symptoms.

There are few simple steps swimmers can take to help prevent swimmers itch:

- Avoid swimming near or in marshy areas where snails are commonly found.
- Reduce the amount of time in the water.
- Dry off quickly when getting out of the water.

For more information about swimmer's itch, visit [www.cdc.gov/parasites/swimmersitch/](http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/swimmersitch/).

### Infographic: – Cercarial Dermatitis



To view in full size, visit [https://www.cdc.gov/dpdx/cercarialdermatitis/modules/Cercarial\\_LifeCycle\\_lg.jpg](https://www.cdc.gov/dpdx/cercarialdermatitis/modules/Cercarial_LifeCycle_lg.jpg).

**Have a healthy and happy week!**

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