

## PREVENTION IS POSSIBLE

We have learned enough about the parasites that cause swimmer's itch to greatly reduce this common malady through education on how to minimize the chances of contact with these itch-causing parasites.



Experimental baffle along a dock shielding the larvae from a swim area.

Pool leaf rake with 20 micron mesh net used to skim and clear a swim area.



Experimental pool leaf rake RC boat to skim and clear a baffled swim area.

## LEARN MORE

- Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): [cdc.gov/parasites/swimmersitch](https://cdc.gov/parasites/swimmersitch)
- Lake Leelanau Lake Association: [lakeleelanau.org](https://lakeleelanau.org)
- University of Alberta: [swimmersitch.info](https://swimmersitch.info)
- Freshwater Solutions, LLC: [freshwatersol.com](https://freshwatersol.com)



Scan the code to report your case of swimmer's itch, learn where others are contacting it, and learn more about swimmer's itch.



# PREVENT SWIMMER'S ITCH



## CONTACT US

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Design by Courtney Jerome Media LLC  
on behalf of Lake Leelanau Lake Association



Promoting the protection and preservation of the lake and its watershed

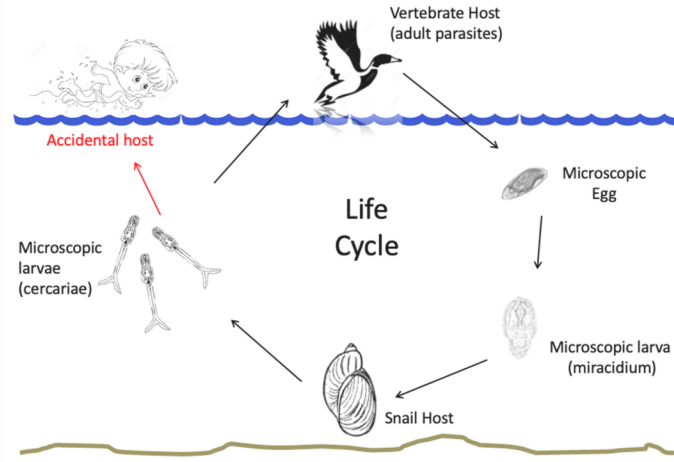


## SHIFTING PARADIGMS

Recent discoveries revealing the great diversity of parasites responsible for causing swimmer's itch has caused a paradigm shift away from lake-wide control and towards personal and localized prevention of swimmer's itch.

Organism diversity is a signal of ecosystem health, even when considering parasites! The same larvae that cause swimmer's itch also function as important members of aquatic food webs and should be preserved. You can think of these larvae as the mosquitoes of the aquatic world - annoying for humans but essential to the natural environment. Their presence and abundance can ultimately help your fishing!

The good news is significant progress has been made to develop and validate effective prevention strategies that empower everyone to minimize the chance of contracting swimmer's itch. Through education we can more safely swim in our beautiful lakes without disrupting the natural ecosystem.



## DID YOU KNOW?

- Each infected snail can release several thousand itch-causing larvae every morning during the summer months.
- The larvae from snails migrate to the surface, don't feed, and therefore only live for a day.
- All waterfowl and even some terrestrial birds carry the adult parasites, so attracting ducks and geese to your swim area is not advised.
- There are now over 100 different itch-causing parasite species around the world.
- Some close relatives of these bird parasites cause schistosomiasis, a human disease infecting millions of people worldwide.
- It's estimated less than half of swimmers react to the itch-causing larvae that penetrate our skin.
- A new species of itch-causing parasite was discovered in Michigan in 2018 and has since been found to be the most widespread.
- Most parasite eggs enter the lake in the feces of birds "pooping" in the water.
- The only infective stage that causes swimmer's itch is the larvae (cercariae) from snails.

## STRATEGIES TO MINIMIZE EXPOSURE

- Wear a full-body rash guard
  - Larvae don't typically penetrate fabric; and bonus: less sunscreen is necessary!
- Swim later in the day
  - Larvae usually exit snails each morning & will die or be eaten during the day.
- Avoid lounging in surface waters
  - Larvae migrate to the surface and can accumulate in shallow water.
- Avoid onshore winds
  - Larvae move with the wind and can congregate near windward shores.
- Towel off after swimming
  - Some larvae are sticky and can cling to the skin when you exit the water.
- Swim in deeper water if you are able
  - Larvae are released from shallow water snails so fewer are found in deeper water.
- Employ a swim baffle\*
  - Baffles show promise in diverting drifting larvae away from swim areas.
- Skim the swim area surface\*
  - Modified pool leaf rakes show promise in clearing a swim area of the larvae.
- Try different creams & lotions
  - Various products claim to repel larvae from entering the skin.
- Contact your lake association
  - They may have reporting tools available to avoid areas with recently reported cases.

\*This novel approach is undergoing development – monitor the sites under "Learn More" for future developments.