



Safe For Swimming?

Pollution at America's beaches, and what we can do about it

Pollution at beaches threatens our health

Americans love the beach. But too often, the water at our beaches can make us sick.

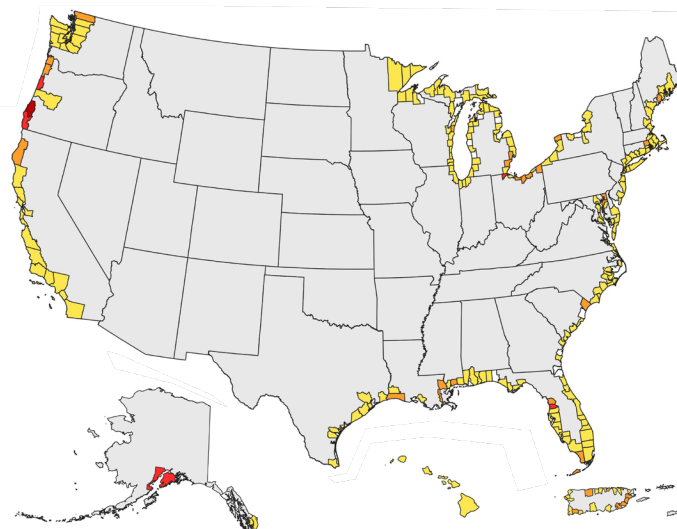
Swimming in contaminated water can cause gastrointestinal illness as well as respiratory disease, ear and eye infection, and skin rash. Each year, there are an estimated 57 million cases of illness in the U.S. resulting from swimming in oceans, lakes, rivers and ponds.

Contaminated water can also trigger health warnings or closures that interfere with our ability to enjoy the beach. There were more than 8,700 health warnings or closures at U.S. ocean and Great Lakes beaches in 2022, affecting one out of every 12 swimming days.

Roughly one-half of U.S. beaches had potentially unsafe contamination levels in 2022

In 2022, 1,761 out of 3,192 tested beaches nationwide (55%) experienced at least one day on which fecal contamination reached potentially unsafe levels — that is, exceeding EPA's most protective "Beach Action Value," a conservative, precautionary tool states can use to make beach notification decisions.

And 363 beaches — approximately one out of every nine beaches tested nationwide — had potentially unsafe levels of fecal contamination on at on at least 25% of the days testing took place. (For more local information on beach water safety in 2022, please see the other side of this fact sheet.)

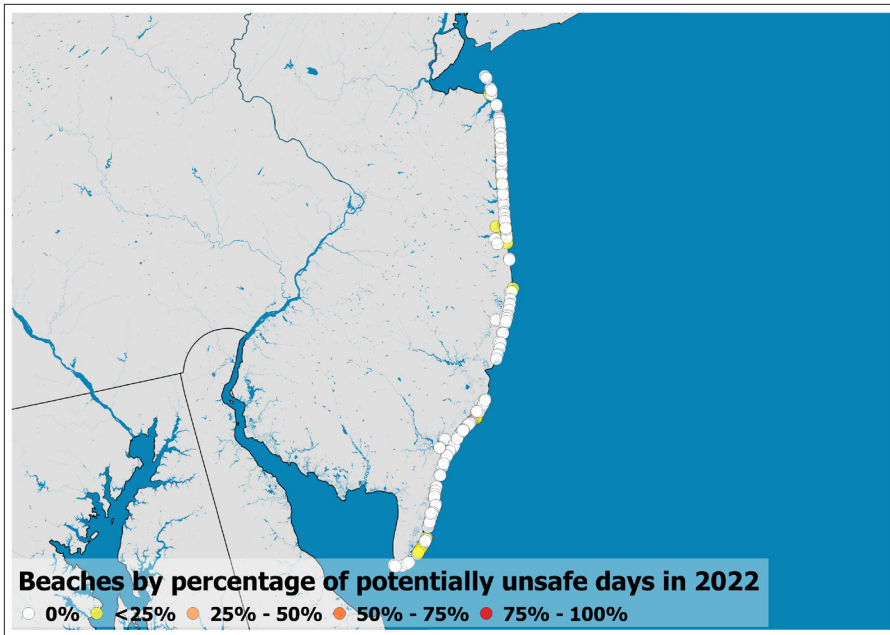


Counties by average percentage of potentially unsafe days in 2022
 0% <=25% 25%-50% 50%-75% 75%-100%

Potentially unsafe levels of fecal contamination were found at beaches across the country in 2022.

Runoff, sewage, agriculture among causes of beach pollution

Polluted stormwater runoff following rainfall events was the leading cause of beach closures and health advisories in 2022, among the roughly 45 percent of events for which a cause has been determined. Other significant sources of pathogen pollution that can make swimmers sick include sewage overflows, septic systems and in some places, manure from industrial livestock production.



Top beach sites by potentially unsafe swimming days, 2022

Beach name	County	Potentially unsafe days in 2022	Percentage of testing days with potentially unsafe water
Atlantic City at Mississippi Ave.*	Atlantic County	3	14%
Atlantic City at Texas*	Atlantic County	3	14%
Lavallette Borough at Brooklyn*	Ocean County	2	13%
Toms River Township at Shelter Cove	Ocean County	2	12%
Atlantic City at North Carolina*	Atlantic County	2	10%
Barneгат Light Borough at 10th	Ocean County	1	8%
Highlands Borough at Highlands Rec Center	Monmouth County	1	8%
Upper Township at Beesley's Point Beach	Cape May County	1	7%
Atlantic City at Arkansas*	Atlantic County	1	6%
Atlantic City at New York Ave.*	Atlantic County	1	6%
Berkeley Township at 23rd Ave.	Ocean County	1	6%
Neptune Township at Broadway	Monmouth County	1	6%

* Beach has more than one associated testing site, which may affect number of potentially unsafe days.

Beach pollution in New Jersey

🔗 In 2022, 217 beaches were tested for fecal indicator bacteria in New Jersey. At 31 of those beaches, testing found potentially unsafe water on at least one day, but no beaches were potentially unsafe on at least 25% of the days they were tested. Two beaches – Atlantic City at Mississippi Ave. in Atlantic County, and Atlantic City at Texas in Atlantic County – tested as potentially unsafe for three days, more than any other beaches in the state. In Atlantic County, the average beach was potentially unsafe for swimming on 2% of the days that sampling took place, a higher percentage than any other county in the state.

Solutions to prevent beach pollution

Ensuring our beaches are safe for swimming will require officials to take several key steps:

- Continue investing in water infrastructure. While the bipartisan infrastructure law provides nearly \$12 billion for sewage and stormwater, ending sewage overflows will require additional investments from state and local governments.
- Prioritizing “green infrastructure” projects such as green roofs and rain gardens to reduce stormwater flow.
- Protecting streams and wetlands, reducing the amount of pollution that finds its way to beaches.
- Adopting moratoria on industrial-scale livestock operations, especially those upstream from or in close proximity to beaches.

For more information on water pollution at beaches, as well as sources and detailed methodology, visit our “Safe for Swimming?” webpage at <http://environmentamerica.org/NewJersey/center/resources/safe-for-swimming/>

