

# Swimmer's itch: A common summertime pest. (schistosome dermatitis)

***Chances are, if you swim in a Northern Ontario Lake this summer you will encounter "Swimmer's itch."***

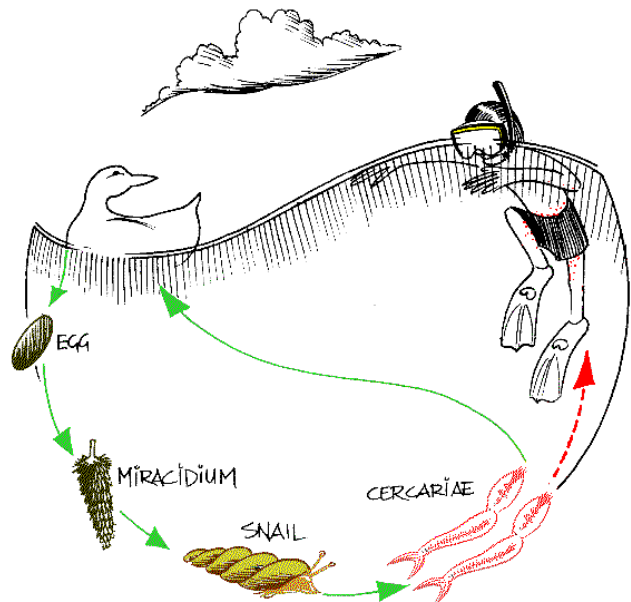
Our lakes contain the suitable snails that act as intermediate hosts for this parasite of birds. When humans become accidental hosts, it causes a temporary skin infection that can be extremely itchy in some cases and debilitating for some sensitive individuals.

It is impossible to kill these "larvae" in their aquatic environment but humans can prevent them from penetrating their skin by following these recommendations.

- Do not stand still while bathing.
- Stay out of weed infested waters.
- If working in shallow waters, near your dock or cleaning out weeds near shore, wear protective clothing.
- Since it takes a few minutes for the worms to penetrate human skin, toweling briskly before water

droplets dry on your body will prevent their entry.

If you do become infected with these "worms", remember that they do not survive in humans and that the red spots will eventually completely disappear. "Anti-itch" agents such as "caladryl" will soothe the problem and more sensitive individuals may have to consult their family doctors for further treatment.



**For more information:  
Porcupine Health Unit  
1-800-461-1818 or  
(705)267-1181**

