Newton County Health Department Environmental Public Health Specialists are available to answer general questions about water safety, as well as questions about specific bodies of water in the area. Contact them at 417.451.3743 Ext 3.

For updated advisories & additional information, visit the Newton County Health Department website at www.newtoncountyhealth.org

For the Missouri Fish Advisory, and additional recreational water safety information, visit the Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services at: www.dhss.mo.gov/fishadvisory/ or www.dhss.mo.gov/RecreationalWater/

For information about identification of Missouri fish that are safe to eat, regional recreation information, locations of bodies of water in Newton County and more, visit the Missouri Department of Conservation at: www.mdc.mo.gov
The Missouri Ozarks has a unique set of sites that attract thousands of visitors from around the country on any given day, particularly on sunny, summer days. Ozarks springs, streams, reservoirs and ponds abound. On any given day, the recreational activities in these waters may include fishing, swimming, boating, sailing, canoeing, tubing, wading or just sitting by the bank enjoying the scenery.

Natural waters are dynamic, ever changing. Streams and rivers continue to deliver downstream whatever they have picked up upstream. Ponds and reservoirs are affected by currents and winds pushing water and whatever contaminants it contains from one area to another. A perfectly safe and healthy recreation spot on a river or lake can change in a matter of minutes to hours into one that presents real risks to its users.

Ironically, it is the very scenic beauty of our natural bodies of water that may be contributing to periods of risk in using them for recreational activities. The Ozarks’ scenic beauty brings on an influx of tourists and new permanent residents. The increased population density means more pollutants from fertilizers, household cleaners, and sewage, to name a few, that have to be dealt with. Often times, runoff after rains or inadequately functioning waste treatment plants (private home or city) contribute to the pollutant load that ends up in a stream or lake. These pollutants can cause real and significant illness such as:

- Rashes
- Eye, ear, nose and throat infections
- Gastrointestinal illnesses that can cause nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea

Stay healthy and safe

- Avoid whole body contact if you have an illness that decreases your natural immune system.
- Be aware that rainfall events have a tendency to wash the surrounding watershed clean of pollutants, depositing them in streams and lakes. It takes at least a day or two for these waterways to recover from rain events.
- When swimming in an unknown area, check upstream and around the site to ensure there are not direct pollution sources such as livestock in the stream, an industrial facility, or a waste discharge to the body of water.
- Fishing is typically safe as well as consumption of the fish (if prepared appropriately) with the exception of certain areas and fish species due to heavy metal contamination (consult the Missouri Fish Advisory).
- Canoeing, floating, and wading that don’t involve whole body contact or accidental water consumption are typically safe and present a relatively low level of risk.
- If a body of water is posted with a “swimming advisory” use common sense in your decision as to your recreational activity. Do realize that bacteriological testing of these dynamic natural waters is only predictive, not diagnostic. A water test collected in the morning of any given day and analyzed the next day after incubation indicates the previous morning’s water quality, not necessarily the present water quality.

Natural beauty, possible risk

NEWTON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Stay Safe in SW Missouri Waters

Have fun & play safe!