

# SWIMMER'S ITCH

**SWIMMER'S ITCH** is reported in \_\_\_\_\_ lake this year. It is a dermatitis caused by the penetration of the larval stage of certain flatworms that can be picked up while swimming. It is neither dangerous nor contagious, but is very uncomfortable.

The site of the penetration in humans is apparent by a **small red welt**. The degree of discomfort and bodily reaction varies with the sensitivity of the individual and the degree of infestation. In some persons the reaction may be hardly noticeable. Others have considerable pain, fever, severe itching and swelling. The swelling will usually subside within a week, but the red coloration can persist longer.

Swimmer's itch organisms are most commonly noted in **early summer**, about the time summer water temperatures reach a seasonal maximum. The season is relatively short, usually lasting four to six weeks, depending on the weather.

After the flatworms have penetrated the skin, there is **little that can be done in the way of treatment**. **Some relief may be obtained** through the use of soothing lotions such as calamine or lotions that have additives such as antihistamines and/or local anesthetics.

**IF YOU DECIDE TO GO SWIMMING, THE MOST IMPORTANT PREVENTATIVE MEASURE IS TO RUB DOWN VERY BRISKLY WITH A TOWEL IMMEDIATELY AFTER LEAVING THE WATER. STAY CLEAR OF PLANTS GROWING IN THE LAKE AND SHOWERING SHORTLY AFTER LEAVING THE WATER SHOULD ALSO HELP.**