

Information Letter and Consent Form

Study title: Enhancing accessibility and use of Alberta's natural water recreation areas through prevention of swimmer's itch transmission

Investigators:

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Background:

Thank-you for visiting our website and for your interest in participating in our survey related to swimmer's itch occurrences in Canada. We hope that you take a few minutes to fill in our survey, which is designed to help us learn more about when and where swimmer's itch is afflicting Canadian recreational water users. This survey is one part of a larger study supported by Alberta Innovates – Energy and Environment Solutions, which is focused on designing strategies for mitigating the impact that swimmer's itch has on recreational water users in Alberta and Canada. It is completely anonymous, and is currently the only long-term record of swimmer's itch outbreaks in Canada.

Purpose:

This website survey is designed to document occurrences of swimmer's itch across Canada, with an emphasis on Alberta. We are interested in determining where and when swimmer's itch outbreaks take place in Canada, and due to the scale of this task, request your participation in this anonymous survey. The data collected in this survey is meant to inform us regarding swimmer's itch in Canada, and will be used primarily to develop a publicly available swimmer's itch risk map, which is updated regularly and is accessible on this website (www.swimmersitch.ca). Our intent is not to dissuade the usage of Canada's public recreational water resources, but to inform sound decision making when determining when and where to partake in recreational activities. We hope that by documenting swimmer's itch occurrences over time we will be able to develop a long-term preventative strategy that can be put into action to inform recreational water users about the risk of swimmer's itch at particular recreational sites.

This survey is also being used to inform the collection of relevant parasites from sites deemed to be of high risk for swimmer's itch transmission. Risk will be determined by repetitive survey responses originating from a single recreational site. We intend to collect more detailed

information related to parasite presence and environmental factors at these sites. This information, along with specific occurrence data compiled from this website survey will be used to generate scientific manuscripts and will be included as part of a PhD student thesis (Michelle Gordy). All information collected as part of this survey is anonymous, and no identifying information is requested or collected, nor will any specific identifiers be published.

Study procedures:

If you or someone you know contracted swimmer's itch somewhere in Canada, we are interested in collecting specific site information from you via the survey associated with this website. As part of the survey we will ask for the specific location where swimmer's itch was contracted, as well as for various descriptions of the physical environment around the site of activity. For example, we are interested in knowing whether you saw and snails at the beach, or any ducks; was it particularly hot outside, or was there a lot of dead vegetation on the beach? All of these factors are known to influence, or be required for, the parasites that cause swimmer's itch to be present and active in the water. Descriptions of how these features can influence swimmer's itch can be found in the FAQ section of this website. No identifying information is collected as part of this survey, and you may access any part of this website without participating.

Benefits:

The data collected from this survey will primarily be used to develop a swimmer's itch risk map, which can be used to see where and when swimmer's itch outbreaks have occurred across Canada. We hope that you use this map to make informed decisions regarding where you swim. Information you provide about your swimmer's itch experiences could be used by someone else to prevent exposure and save them from getting the itch.

In the long term, our goal is to use the data collected from this survey to develop risk models for recreational sites that are high use, and high risk. Using these models we can inform users about the swimmer's itch risks during an entire recreational season.

Participation in this survey is entirely voluntary:

You are under no obligation to participate in this survey. You may answer as many of the posed questions (or none at all) that you like.

Confidentiality and Anonymity:

All data collected from this survey is anonymous. No identifying information is collected, or desired. Swimmer's itch occurrence data will be made accessible via the risk map page of this website, but no other information included in the survey will be made public on the website. Survey data related to site specific factors will be compiled and used for publication in a scientific journal. This manuscript will be made accessible via a hyperlink on this website (www.swimmersitch.ca) once it is completed.

All data collected will be compiled and stored on computers at the University of Alberta. If at any time you wish your responses to be removed from the dataset, you can contact us at:

info@swimmersitch.ca to have your responses removed. In order for us to accurately remove your responses we will require the time and date of your survey completion as well as the lake at which you reported contracting swimmer's itch (we don't have access to any other identifying information).

Further information:

Additional information regarding this study can be found at www.swimmersitch.ca, or by contacting the researchers initiating the study, Dr. Patrick Hanington and Michelle Gordy, at info@swimmersitch.ca.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Consent Statement:

By checking the box below I acknowledge that I have read this form and understand the research study that has been explained to me above. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have additional questions, I have been told whom to contact. I agree to participate in the research study described above.