



## Loudoun County, Virginia

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### Loudoun County Officials Issue Water Safety Reminders

The COVID-19 pandemic has delayed the opening of public pools and as a result, many residents may seek relief from the summer weather and recreation in naturally occurring waters, such as the Potomac River and area creeks and lakes. Loudoun County officials urge residents to use caution while swimming in naturally occurring waterways, human-made bodies of water and private pools as they can pose a variety of health and safety risks, especially to children.

“With pools still closed after Memorial Day, a time when residents would normally already be enjoying them, more children are swimming in local waterways,” noted Loudoun County Health Director Dr. David Goodfriend. “The Health Department wants to remind parents to monitor children who may go into Loudoun’s creeks, ponds and other nearby waters and to encourage all families to take the necessary precautions around water this summer.”

Many communities in Loudoun County strictly prohibit swimming in ponds. Residents should observe all posted signs and follow the directions on the signs.

“If you live near a waterway, we ask that you remain watchful for children attempting to venture into the water to swim,” said Loudoun County Sheriff Mike Chapman. “These waters can be treacherous.”

In addition, parents and anyone [swimming in natural waters](#) should be aware of [recreational water illnesses](#), which are caused by germs and chemicals found in the water. Natural waters can be susceptible to pollution that can cause health risks to people. Bacteria and algae can be dangerous and cause illness in people and pets.

To help prevent illness:

- Avoid swimming in natural waters for a few days after a heavy rain event.
- Avoid swallowing water when swimming.
- Avoid getting water shot up your nose when swimming, especially in warm shallow water.
- Avoid swimming or wading in with open wounds or cuts.
- Don’t swim in areas where there are dead fish present.
- Don’t swim if you are ill.
- Shower with soap and clean water after swimming.
- Avoid swimming in muddy water of lakes, ponds and rivers.

“Bodies of water such as lakes, rivers and ponds have many hidden dangers, such as underwater debris, sudden drop-offs, vegetation and unpredictable currents,” said Loudoun County Combined Fire and Rescue System Chief Keith H. Johnson. “Before you get in the water, survey the area and be aware of the potential dangers.”

It is also important to be aware of local weather conditions prior to recreational activities in the water. Residents should use extra caution following heavy rainfall because additional debris may be in the water and the strength of currents may increase. To help prevent injury or drowning:

- Avoid swimming in unfamiliar ponds, streams, creeks, ditches and canals.
- Avoid consuming drugs, alcohol and any substances that can impact alertness, judgment, coordination and reaction time.
- Ensure that children wear life jackets in and around natural bodies of water even if they know how to swim.
- Children should only swim when they are being actively supervised at all times by adults, without distractions.
- Never swim alone; always have a buddy.
- Get out of the water right away if you hear thunder or see lightning.
- Have the means to call for help, such as a cell phone, if necessary, and be aware of your location so you can provide that information to emergency personnel.

The [Virginia Department of Health](#) and Loudoun County also remind the owners of private pools to take measures to ensure safe swimming for all who may use them. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) recommends](#):

- Take steps to prevent drowning, which is the leading cause of injury-related death in children 1 to 4 years old.
- Ensure adult supervision of children and that pool users have basic swim skills.
- Ensure proper fencing around private pools.
- Handle pool chemicals safety and ensure proper disinfection procedures.
- Do not swim when sick with diarrhea.
- Know how to recognize a swimmer in distress and learn CPR.

The CDC also recommends that you take steps to [protect yourself from the sun](#) during all outdoor activity, including putting on broad spectrum sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher before going outside.

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