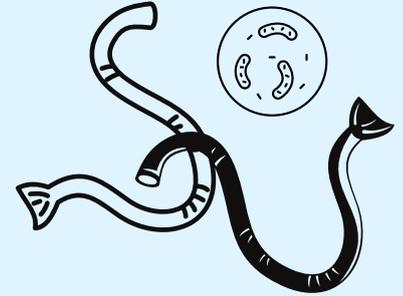# Swimmer's Itch
(Cercarial Dermatitis)

What is Swimmer's Itch?

Swimmer's itch, also called cercarial dermatitis, appears as a skin rash caused by an allergic reaction to certain microscopic parasites that infect some birds and mammals. These parasites are released from infected snails into fresh and salt water (such as lakes, ponds, and oceans). While the parasite's preferred host is the specific bird or mammal, if the parasite comes into contact with a swimmer, it burrows into the skin causing an allergic reaction and rash. Swimmer's itch is found throughout the world and is more frequent during summer months.

Fast Facts:

Who is at risk?	Anyone who swims or wades in infested water may be at risk. Larvae are more likely to be present in shallow water by the shoreline. Children are most often affected because they tend to swim, wade, and play in the shallow water more than adults. Also, they are less likely to towel dry themselves when leaving the water.
What are the symptoms?	Symptoms of swimmer's itch may include: • Tingling, burning, or itching of the skin • Small reddish pimples • Small blisters
How can I reduce my risk of getting swimmer's itch?	To reduce the likelihood of developing swimmer's itch: • Do not swim in areas where swimmer's itch is a known problem or where signs have been posted warning of unsafe water. • Do not swim near or wade in marshy areas where snails are commonly found. • Towel dry or shower immediately after leaving the water. • Do not attract birds (e.g., by feeding them) to areas where people are swimming.
What is the treatment?	Most cases of swimmer's itch do not require medical attention. If you have a rash, you may try the following for relief: • Use corticosteroid cream • Apply cool compresses to the affected areas • Bathe in Epsom salts or baking soda • Soak in colloidal oatmeal baths • Use an anti-itch lotion