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## WHO HAS BEEN PLAYING IN YOUR GLASS OF WATER?

by Alicia Carlson  
NH Lakes

With nearly 1,000 lakes and ponds in our state, there are many chances to get out and enjoy them ... at all times of

the year, but particularly right now as summer has officially arrived! The residents and visitors of New Hampshire use these clean waters for swimming, boating and fishing, among other activities.

Many of our lakes and ponds are also used to provide drinking water. These water supply lakes are protected to varying degrees. Of the 35 water

supply lakes, ponds, and reservoirs in New Hampshire, recreation is restricted in one way or another on nearly all of them. On some lakes all activities are prohibited, while on others only swimming or fishing are prohibited.

In the Lakes Region, both Paus Bay in Laconia and Lake Waukewan in Meredith are water supply lakes. The water department degrees. Of the 35 water

See **LAKES** on 37

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# ENJOY THE WATER

Get the most out of NH's Lakes!



**LAKES** from 36  
ments that manage the lakes where recreation is allowed must be constantly aware of the activities that are taking place. How do water managers find the balance between allowing recreation and maintaining a water supply that is as safe as possible? It can be tricky!

When a person's body comes in contact with the water, whether through swimming or other body-contact recreation activities, bacteria and other microorganisms enter the water. This happens when these organisms are either washed off the skin or (especially when children in diapers or people with gastrointestinal infections are involved) by accidental fecal releases.

Different microorganisms can be killed or removed in different ways. Many are killed by disinfection (using chemicals such as chlorine) while others are removed by filtering the water. But some organisms can survive both methods. For instance, the protozoans *Giardia* and *Cryptosporidium* are resistant to chlorine; they must be removed through filtering. But even that is not 100 percent effective. Surveys—conducted outside of New Hampshire—of fully disinfected and filtered water have found small numbers of *Cryptosporidium* oocysts in tap water in 27 to 54 percent of the communities evaluated. This underscores the importance of the multiple-barrier approach to safe drinking water—an approach that has long been promoted by the N.H. Department of Environmental Services (DES), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the water supply industry. This means that, rather than relying on a single barrier such as treatment, it makes sense to use a series of barriers, including source water

protection (keeping the source water as clean as possible), treatment and monitoring.

Because of the changeable nature of surface water quality, water departments must be on their toes at all times. They must be aware of what is happening on the lake and know how to best treat the water. They also should monitor activities near the lake and in its watershed. This includes surveying businesses to see how they store chemicals and other materials—such as fertilizers—that might pollute the water.

Only with a robust multiple-barrier approach in place should lake water be considered a safe, reliable source of drinking water. While some homeowners pump water from lakes for use in their homes, DES strongly recommends against using untreated or inadequately treated lake water for drinking. If you do this at your lake shore home, be aware that there are risks involved. Consider all that water departments do to provide clean water to their customers. Are you doing all you can to pro-

vide safe, clean water for your family?

What can you do to protect our lakes and ensure clean water for your family? Drink only water that has been properly treated. Keep natural vegetation intact in the shoreland zone. Avoid swimming and other body-contact activities near intakes used by water systems. Many of these areas are labeled. Watch for signs and follow the water department's

suggestions.

By working together, we can be sure our water will be safe and clean for all residents, businesses and visitors of New Hampshire.

For more information about what you can do to ensure clean water, contact DES at (603) 271-2513 or [dwgbinfo@des.nh.gov](mailto:dwgbinfo@des.nh.gov), or NH LAKES at (603) 226-0299 or [info@nhlakes.org](mailto:info@nhlakes.org).

The New Hampshire Lakes Association (NH LAKES) is a member-supported, non-profit organization dedicated to protecting New Hampshire's lakes and their watersheds. Find NH LAKES on Facebook by searching for "NH LAKES (NH Lakes Association)" at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and become a fan of their page. To receive NH LAKES' free monthly e-news blast, Shorelines, full of interested lake-related information, sign up at [www.nhlakes.org](http://www.nhlakes.org).

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