

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Ginger Heidel

912.644.5217**Health Department Issues Swimming Advisories for Four Tybee Island Beaches**

TYBEE ISLAND, GA— The Chatham County Health Department has placed four beach areas along Tybee Island under advisory. Beach water along five public access points on Tybee Island is tested routinely each week. Water samples taken November 26th show the beach water in four of the testing locations contains a high level of enterococci bacteria, which increase the risk of gastrointestinal illness in swimmers.

“At this point we don’t suspect human contamination,” says Chris Rustin, Environmental Health Director for the Chatham County Health Department. “But advisories on Tybee Island are rare, so as a precaution we’ve asked the local Environmental Protection Division to investigate.” Weather conditions could be a culprit, with the full moon causing higher than normal tides, and wind activity stirring the waters. However it is likely the cause of the elevated bacteria levels will never be known.

The four beaches areas under advisory are:

- South Beach at Chatham Street – from 18th Street to Inlet Avenue
- Strand Beach at the Pier – from 11th Street to 18th Street
- North Beach at Gulick Street – from the jetty to Lovell Street
- Polk Street Beach - the northernmost part of Tybee Island at the mouth of the Savannah River

The Chatham County Health Department recommends that you do not swim or wade in the water in these areas. Fish and other seafood caught from these areas should be thoroughly washed with fresh water and thoroughly cooked before eating.

All four beach areas will be retested November 28th, and results should be available the next day. The advisories will be lifted when tests show the bacteria levels meet the Environmental Protection Agency’s recommended standard.

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