OCEAN WATER QUALITY

Ocean water quality is monitored up and down the California coast. Ocean and bay water is tested, and when coliform bacterial counts are too high advisories or closures are posted.

Imperial Beach uses Southern California Coastal Ocean Observing System (SDCOOS) data and lifeguard’s observations to close beaches BEFORE swimmers, surfers, and other beach users are exposed to environmental hazards. [Link](http://sccoos.ucsd.edu/data/tracking/IB/)

During the dry season (April to October) the ocean water from the south end of Seacoast Drive north to Silver Strand is almost always open for recreation. Enjoy Imperial Beach’s natural beauty!

To stay healthy, keep out of the water for 72 hours (3 days) after a rainfall of 0.2” or more, or if beach closure signs are posted.

You can enjoy the ocean and a healthy, active lifestyle at Imperial Beach.

Call the San Diego County Department of Environmental Health Beach and Bay Water Quality Hotline for current conditions: (619) 338-2073 or visit [http://sdbeachinfo.com](http://sdbeachinfo.com)

Imperial Beach Health Center and Nestor Community Health Center provide affordable, high quality primary health care to children and adults. You can be seen even if you do not have health insurance.

Imperial Beach Health Center
949 Palm Avenue
Imperial Beach, CA 91933

Nestor Community Health Center
1016 Outer Road
San Diego, CA 92154

Phone: 619-429-3733
Website: [www.ibclinic.org](http://www.ibclinic.org)

Environmental Health and Ocean Water Quality at Imperial Beach

Be active, be healthy and enjoy the ocean safely!

Imperial Beach Health Center
Nestor Community Health Center
[www.ibclinic.org](http://www.ibclinic.org)
(619) 429-3733
Why care about it?

Anywhere storm runoff, rivers and lagoon waters enter the ocean there are likely to be high levels bacteria and viruses that can make people sick.

Coliform bacteria are normally found in the gut of animals, including humans. When these bacteria are present, it can mean there is a sewage spill. That means there are other viruses and bacteria in the water which could cause upset stomach, diarrhea, headache, fever, cough, congestion, eye, ear, nose, throat, or skin infections, or more serious infections of the liver.

When coliform bacteria are present, or suspected of being present at high levels, beach closure signs are posted. In Imperial Beach these are almost always associated with rain, and with storm runoff reaching the ocean via storm drains and the Tijuana River.

In Imperial Beach it is illegal to “enter, remain in, or...refuse to leave a closed area of a beach, harbor or ocean water”. Ord. 2003-1005 § 1 (part), 2003) Imperial Beach Municipal Code 12.60.150

Dry weather vs. Wet weather

Dry Weather
During the dry season, when the Tijuana River doesn’t flow, Imperial Beach water quality is comparable to other beaches in San Diego County, and almost always safe for recreation.

Wet Weather
Researchers at San Diego State University tested water at the Tijuana River mouth for viruses and bacteria that could make people sick. During wet weather potentially harmful viruses are almost always present at the Tijuana River mouth. (Hepatitis A virus was detected in 86% of wet weather samples, and enteroviruses were found in 100 percent of wet weather samples.)

During the 72-hour period after a rain of .2” or more, Hepatitis A virus and enteroviruses were detected 79 and 93 percent of the time, respectively, at Imperial Beach (near the pier)

This is why you are advised to stay out of the water for 72 hours following .2” or more of rain. Signs are not posted during a general rain advisory, so it is up to you to notice, and stay out of the water.

The beach near the Tijuana Slough and river mouth can be closed for six months of the year, while neighboring beaches to the north are open and safe for swimming. Sign will come down when beach status changes.

Networking for Community Health

Imperial Beach Health Center, Wildcoast and San Diego State University worked together to analyze the public health risks of swimming, surfing, playing and fishing in the ocean waters at Imperial Beach. We learned:

- People who go to the beach in summer (when the beach is open) appear to be at very low risk of getting sick from ocean water at Imperial Beach.

- Those at highest risk are those who go into the water year round, even when and where beach closure signs are posted, and do activities like swimming and surfing which result in swallowing ocean water.

- Fish caught at Imperial Beach Pier were tested for pesticides and heavy metals. Our samples were found to be as safe to eat as fish sold in supermarkets.

The Networking for Community Health Project (2008-2010) was funded by The Community Clinics Initiative, a joint venture of the TIDES Foundation and The California Endowment.