

Weil's Disease (Leptospirosis)

Weil's disease is contracted by exposure to contaminated water. Although rare on our part of the Thames, please read through the following and remember to explain the risks and safety tips if you are leading a group of paddlers. This should be a standard part of your safety briefing and risk assessment.

Safety Tips

- Washing your hands after paddling or handling wet kit before eating sounds daft after you have just swallowed plenty of water paddling but DOES work. Putting fresh bacteria into your system from your hands at the same time as the food is not a good idea and provides the wee nasties with a food source.
- Drinking Coke may or may not help. There are so many different bacteria out there that all thrive on different conditions that coke may harm one bacteria, but not another. There are different opinions offered from a variety of knowledgeable sources, so I would say drink it, the sugar and caffeine sure help on the drive home.
- If you really want to prevent getting ill in the first place then consider trying the probiotic drinks/yoghurts/tablets you see advertised on TV. They are not just a rip off. By increasing the amount of harmless bacteria in your gut you will reduce the amount of available nutrients left in your gut for the wee river nasties to thrive on and take hold.
- Once you are ill there is little you can do. The latest medical advice is not to stop eating to starve the bacteria, but to keep eating simple foods, as this will keep energy levels up to fight the illness. Also flat coke may help, but the caffeine and high sugar will not help to hydrate you. The best drink to take is the rehydration sachet drinks especially for diarrhoea such as dioralyte. These have salts and sugars at an isotonic level to aid quick rehydration and also work incredibly well on hangovers.
- If you are tight you can make your own isotonic drink using 200ml squash to 800ml water with 1/4 teaspoon of salt or 500ml fruit juice with 500ml water and 1/4 teaspoon of salt.

AVERAGE SUMMER	High natural disinfection. High sewage works efficiency. No storm water.	LOW RISK. Probably EC Bathing water Directive Standard
AVERAGE WINTER	Lower natural disinfection. lower sewage works efficiency.	MEDIUM RISK
WINTER STORM	Storm Water input. Sewage work overflow. BUT - high dilution, no sediment build up in storm drains	MEDIUM TO HIGH RISK
SUMMER STORM	Storm water input. Sewage works overflow. Little dilution. High sediment build up in storm drains.	HIGH RISK

Table 10. Estimate of variation relative risk levels of canoeing with season and weather

There is a detailed thesis on this matter, prepared by a canoeist, at the link below ...

<http://www.simondawson.com/bugch6.htm#l62>