

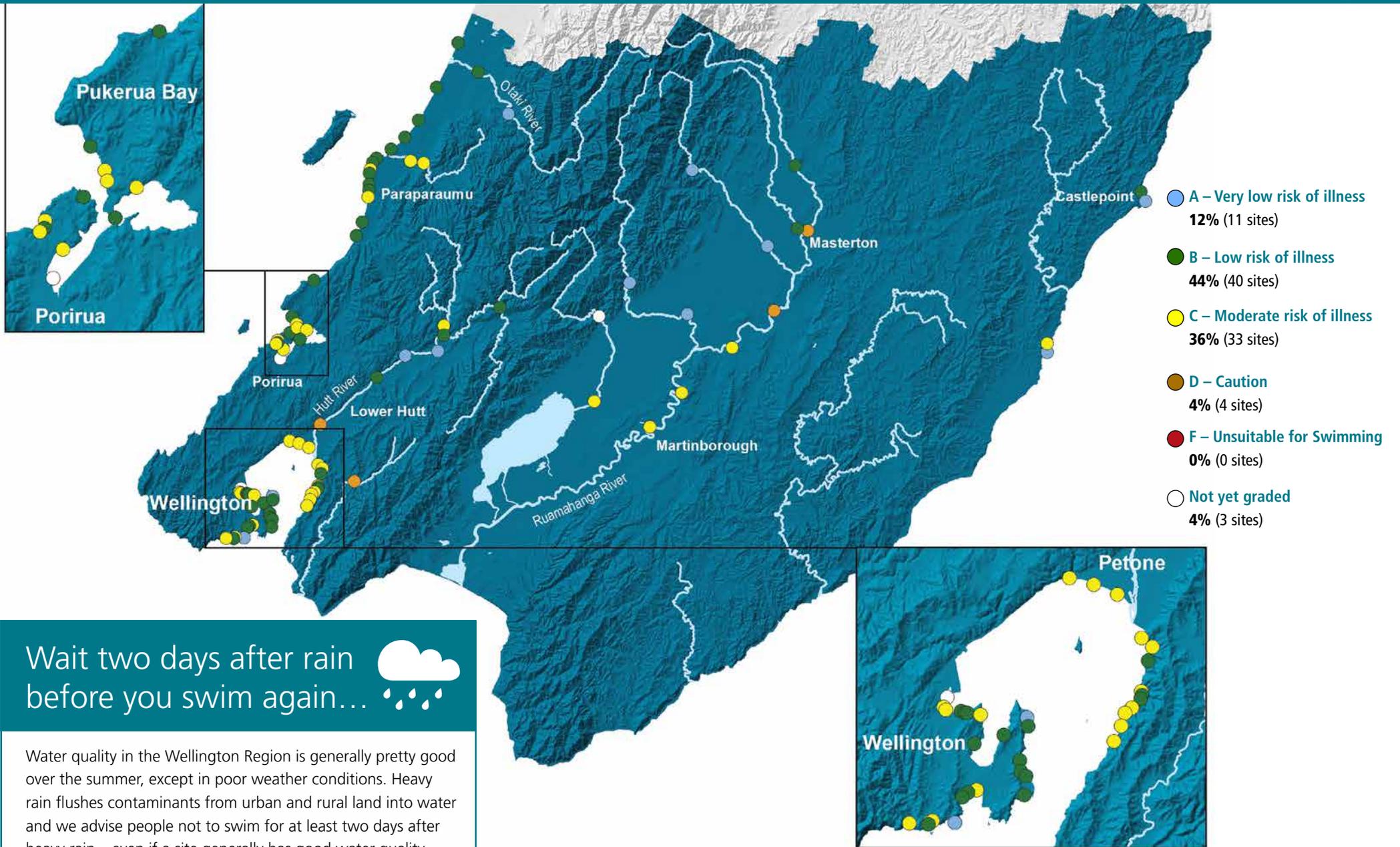
Is it safe to swim in the Wellington Region?

Recreational water quality monitoring results for the 2016/17 summer



greater WELLINGTON
REGIONAL COUNCIL
Te Pane Matua Taiao





Wait two days after rain before you swim again...

Water quality in the Wellington Region is generally pretty good over the summer, except in poor weather conditions. Heavy rain flushes contaminants from urban and rural land into water and we advise people not to swim for at least two days after heavy rain – even if a site generally has good water quality.

Of the 1,488 samples taken over the 2016/17 summer, only 62 (four percent) did not meet the guideline for safe swimming and nearly three quarters of these were associated with rainfall.



Yes! It's safe to swim in most places

Some of the best swimming spots in the region are; Mahanga Bay and Princess Bay (Wellington City), the Otaki River (Kapiti Coast), the upper part of the Hutt River (Upper Hutt Valley), Castlepoint and Riversdale beaches (Wairarapa Coast), and the Waingawa and Waiohine rivers (Wairarapa Valley). These swimming spots have an overall grade of A and most met the guideline for safe swimming on all sampling occasions.

Some of the worst spots are; Plimmerton Beach and Te Awarua-o-Porirua Harbour (Onepoto Arm) in Porirua, the waterfront, Island Bay and Owhiro Bay in Wellington City, the lower part of the Hutt River and Wainuiomata River in the Hutt Valley, the lower Ruamahanga River and Riversdale Lagoon in the Wairarapa. These swimming spots have an overall grade of C or D meaning that the site is susceptible to faecal pollution and water quality is not always suitable for swimming. As a rule, water quality at these sites is most likely to be affected during and up to 48 hours after heavy rain.

A wet summer meant that there were more exceedances of the guideline for safe swimming this year – a total of 62 samples did not meet the guideline, compared with only 30 the previous year. Nearly three quarters of these exceedances were associated with rainfall.

The wetter conditions, and associated higher river flows, also meant that toxic algae growth was not as problematic as the previous season. Although the presence of toxic algae was observed in a number of rivers, the levels recorded were generally very low.

Greater Wellington Regional Council, along with your local city or district council, monitors 25 freshwater, 1 estuarine and 65 coastal sites in the Wellington Region. The results from this monitoring are compared to national guidelines, and used to calculate an overall grade for each site. In the Wellington Region 11 sites are graded A, 40 sites are graded B, 33 sites are graded C, 4 sites are graded D and there are no sites graded F. Three sites are yet to be graded.

For more information on our **Recreational Water Quality Programme** check out www.gw.govt.nz/is-it-safe-to-swim

For further detail on the 2016/17 results check out our **Is it safe to swim?** report at www.gw.govt.nz/Annual-monitoring-reports

For national recreational water quality data and information check out www.lawa.org.nz