



Sea Bather's Eruption



“Sea Lice” is the misused common name given to a condition that causes itching and redness after a person has been in the ocean. The correct term for this condition is “Sea bather's eruption” and describes the symptoms and not the cause.

Sea bather's eruption usually affects areas of the skin that have been covered by clothing such as a bathing suit, rather than exposed areas, after swimming in the ocean.

It is believed to be caused by stings from the stinging cells (also called nematocysts) of the larval forms of certain sea anemones and jellyfishes, or larval forms of Crustaceans (ocean drifters).

Washing off with fresh water is the best first step.

If the person does not have any medical contradictions they may take Benadryl to help stop the itching as well as apply an over the counter anti-itch cream.

As always if someone is having any symptoms of an allergic reaction (breathing problems, pain, severe swelling, etc) they should seek medical attention.



Actual photo of crustacean from an Ocean City bather taken the week of August 20, 2018.



Crab megalopa larva. This larval stage is short-lived, and feed on other zooplankton. After about a week, the megalopa sinks to the sea bed where it molts into a juvenile crab. Photo: Richard R. Kirby

<https://www.audubon.org/magazine/november-december-2011/ocean-drifters>