The condition of swimming beaches indicator reflects marine water quality conditions in areas heavily used for recreation. This indicator tracks the percent of swimming beaches that pass swimming standards with no more than one exceedance of the swimming standard during the summer. Swimming beaches not meeting water quality criteria indicate increased risk of people getting sick through gastrointestinal illnesses, respiratory illnesses, and skin infections.

Key Vital Sign Indicator Results

- 80% of the core Puget Sound marine beaches monitored during the 2021 swim season met the recreational water quality criteria. When considering all marine beaches monitored in 2021, 14 out of 60 failed to meet the recreational water quality criteria.
- Many of the water quality issues identified at swimming beaches in 2021 occurred during and immediately after the record-breaking heat wave.
- The 14 beaches that had two or more exceedances of the swimming standard were Freeland County Park/Holmes Harbor (Island County), Irondale Beach Park and Pt. Whitney Tidlands (Jefferson County), Carkeek Park (King County), Illahee State Park and Lion's Field (Kitsap County), Titlow Park (Pierce County) Howarth Park, Mukilteo Lighthouse and Picnic Point (Snohomish County), Priest Point and Burfoot County Park (Thurston County), and Blaine Marine Drive Park and Little Squalicum Park (Whatcom County).
- Since 2004, soon after the BEACH program started, many local bacteria problems have been identified and corrected. There are still year-to-year fluctuations in marine water quality at swimming beaches, at times attributed to environmental factors such as weather, but many beaches are experiencing water quality improvements due to increased pollution identification work which identifies and corrects chronic issues.