

PREVENTING INFECTIONS

Waterborne Infection Prevention Tips for Athletes

Infection is your silent opponent — defend yourself with smart hygiene!

WHY IT MATTERS?

Waterborne pathogens — including viruses, bacteria, and parasites — can cause infections in kayakers and canoeists, especially in disciplines involving frequent water contact. Simple precautions can significantly reduce the risk.

BEFORE AND DURING PADDLING

- Do not drink the water you are paddling on — always bring your own drinking water.
- Avoid splashing water into your face and eyes.
- If your discipline involves submersion in fast-moving water (e.g., freestyle, squirt boating), use nose plugs and/or ear plugs to reduce exposure of mucous membranes to pathogens.
- Cover all open wounds, grazes, or rashes with waterproof bandages, especially in areas that come into contact with water (e.g., legs in open water surfski).

AFTER PADDLING

- Use hand sanitizer immediately after paddling.
- Shower in clean, fresh water as soon as possible.
- If submerged, perform a nasal rinse with sterile water to lower the risk of respiratory infections.
- If you develop blisters, clean them thoroughly with 70% (not 100%) ethanol and lance with a sterile needle if needed.
- Rinse all paddling kit with fresh water after each session to remove salt and bacteria — dirty kit can lead to skin rashes and infections over time.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Bring and drink your own clean water.

Protect your face, ears, and wounds from water exposure.

Wash, sanitize, and clean both your body and gear after paddling.

Good hygiene is essential for staying healthy on and off the water.

