



Prevent the Spread: Whirling Disease

The Columbia River Watershed is a **high risk** zone for Whirling Disease, an infectious disease caused by a parasite which threatens our salmonid populations. Spores from the parasite hitchhike on boats, gear, footwear; in water, mud, fish or fish parts, and worms. CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY, and follow BC's decontamination protocol when moving between water bodies in the Columbia River Watershed.

Clean, Drain, Dry, Decontaminate

1. Clean - Remove all mud, plants, and debris from watercraft
2. Drain - Empty bilges, live wells, and compartments, & Pull the Plug - it's the law in BC
3. Dry - Allow all items to fully air dry
4. Decontaminate - use Quat disinfectants

How to Decontaminate

Use a Disinfectant:

- Quat Plus -1500 ppm for soaking and 3000ppm for wiping/spraying
- Always wear gloves and follow product safety guidelines
- Quat can cause corrosion on aluminum

Submersible Items:

- Soak in disinfectant solution for 10 minutes
- Use a bin or tote

Non-Submersible Items:

- Spray or wipe thoroughly
- Keep surfaces wet for 10 minutes
- Use pump sprayers for boats, PFDs
- Avoid spraying electronics

Rinse & Dry

- Rinse with clean water (not from the same waterbody)
- Let items dry completely

Safe Disposal

Never pour disinfectants into lakes or rivers. Dispose away from waterbodies, through sanitary sewer with equal volume water (approval of local authorities needed for large amounts).

Dispose of materials used for wiping in garbage



Visit the *Whirling Disease* page on
The Government of BC website.
Read the [Decontamination Protocol](#) for more
details (or scan the QR)

What is Whirling Disease?

Whirling disease is an infectious disease of salmonids including trout, salmon, char, grayling, and whitefish. It is caused by the microscopic freshwater parasite *Myxobolus cerebralis*, which infects both fish and a common aquatic worm (*Tubifex tubifex*). The parasite can cause **symptoms** of skeletal deformities, a telltale “whirling” swimming pattern, and a darkened tail in fish. NOT ALL infected fish exhibit physical symptoms.

Infected juvenile fish populations can experience up to 90% mortality.
Whirling disease is not known to cause harm to humans or non-host animals.

Why it matters:

Whirling disease was detected in tributaries to Kootenay Lake in 2024. There is no treatment. Many susceptible species are already threatened or endangered. The disease threatens wild fish populations, ecosystems, cultural practices, aquaculture, and commercial and recreational fisheries.

How it spreads:

The spores of the parasite travel easily in mud, water, in worms, on boats, gear, footwear, and even on pets. Infected fish, whether alive or dead, and their parts can also carry the disease. Spores can survive out of water in the correct conditions for extended periods of time.

Protect our waters:

Clean, Drain, Dry and Decontaminate your gear.

Pull the plug: it's now the law in BC.

Whirling disease is a federally reportable disease.

Report suspected cases to:

whirlingdisease@gov.bc.ca or call 1-800-442-2342 (CFIA).



HABITAT
CONSERVATION TRUST
FOUNDATION

Be a Steward
Protect our fish.
Protect our ecosystems.



Learn more at:

<https://ckiss.ca/programs/clean-drain-dry>

