

## POLLUTION

# Foul facts on the dangers of a quick dip

SWIMMING in many of the waters around the British coastline could put bathers in danger of illness and infection, according to a new study.

A survey commissioned by the heroically-named Sons of Neptune — six men who swim at Scarborough in all weathers — has discovered that with a few exceptions, like Weston-super-Mare in Somerset, most British sewage is poured into the sea, entirely undisinfected.

The Sons of Neptune commissioned one of Britain's leading experts after their fears were raised by the Scarborough sewage disposal plan of the Yorkshire Water Authority. The hardy six wanted a study which would prove that unless the sewage was disinfected, disease-ridden excrement would harm unsuspecting bathers.

However, the expert, Prof Bruce Denness, formerly principal scientific officer at the Institute of Geological Sciences in London, and professor of ocean engineering at Newcastle University, now believes he has not only proved this but come up with even more disturbing findings.

Recent research in America (where 80% of sewage is disinfected) has shown that vast quantities of bacteria and viruses are not killed by sea water. In fact, sewage viruses can live for 17 months in the sea.

All bathers in such waters are in danger of illness, Denness believes, especially if they have cuts or abrasions on their skin. Sea spray can

even enter landlubbers' noses and make them ill. But the greatest danger is from seafood, especially shellfish.

Denness now thinks many gastroenteritis cases from eating factory-farmed chicken are not from *salmonella* but from contaminated fish meal containing human sewage germs. He also believes it is unsafe to eat raw oysters and many other shellfish.

The large amounts of undetectable sewage germs in the sea threaten us with hepatitis, food poisoning, respiratory infections, skin diseases, conjunctivitis, and other nasties.

Recently 27% of snorkel swimmers who swam in the Bristol dock area came down with intestinal disorders despite the water being within European Community guidelines (compiled without knowledge of the deadly dormancy and undetectability of many viruses and bacteria now shown to survive for months in the sea from sewage dumping).

Denness says it is not only Scarborough which will continue to suffer from raw sewage on its beaches, but most of the sea resorts of Britain, until regular disinfecting of sewage begins.

Filtration and even chlorination are apparently not sufficient, and Denness recommends treatment with lime. He says: "The latest research indicates that no sewage should be released into the sea without proper disinfection to ensure that disease is prevented."

Robert Temple