



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Public Health Officials Issue Warning About an Increase in Recreational Water Illnesses

With Labor Day approaching and an increase in recreational water activity by people, the Southeastern District Health Department (SDHD) are warning people about an increase of cryptosporidiosis cases associated with swimming in recreational waters, including lakes, rivers, canals, swimming pools, waterparks, and splash fountains.

Cryptosporidiosis, commonly known as ‘crypto,’ is a diarrheal disease caused by tiny parasites. It is usually spread by accidentally swallowing water that has been contaminated with human stool or animal waste. Confirmed cases of crypto have been reported throughout the state. If people have been in recreational waters and are experiencing persistent, watery diarrhea since July, they are urged to consult their healthcare provider. So far this year, 37 cases of crypto have been confirmed in the state, 21 of them reported in the last two weeks. Last year, 40 cases were reported during the entire year.

The most frequent symptom is watery diarrhea with abdominal cramping, which can be accompanied by dehydration, weight loss, abdominal pain, fever, nausea, and vomiting. Once a person is infected, the parasites live in the intestines and are passed in the stool. In most instances, infected persons recover without medication. However, a healthcare provider may choose to use medication in cases that do not improve or when other medical issues exist.

“Crypto is an especially resilient recreational water illness,” says Dr. Randall Nett, Epidemic Intelligence Service Officer for the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. “Most recreational water illness sources are killed by the chlorine in pools, however, crypto can live for days even in a properly chlorinated pool. Swimming is great exercise and a fun activity, but we urge people to follow healthy swimming behaviors and to be careful about ingesting any water while swimming.”

(more)

Nett advises people follow these six steps to reduce the spread of water illnesses:

1. PLEASE don't swim when you have diarrhea. This is especially important for kids in diapers. You can spread germs in the water and make other people sick even when you are feeling better. Keep children who've had diarrhea out of the pool for a few days after they feel better. If you have been diagnosed with crypto, please stay out of swimming pools and recreational waters for at least two weeks.
2. PLEASE don't swallow the pool water. In fact, avoid getting water in your mouth.
3. PLEASE practice good hygiene. Take a shower before swimming and wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers. Germs on your body end up in the water.
4. PLEASE take your kids on regular bathroom breaks or change diapers often, and use swim diapers. Waiting to hear "I have to go" may mean that it's too late.
5. PLEASE change diapers in a bathroom; not at the poolside. Germs can spread to surfaces around the pool and spread illness.
6. PLEASE wash your child thoroughly (especially the rear end) with soap and water before swimming. Everyone has invisible amounts of fecal matter on their bottoms that ends up in the pool.

For more information contact Steve Pew, 239-5272, Jeff Doerr, 478-6321 or visit SDHD's website at www.sdhdidaho.org

Additional information about cryptosporidiosis is also available on the CDC's website at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/cryptosporidiosis/default.htm>

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