



LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY
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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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National Recreation Water Illness Prevention Week
May 19th - 25th

The week preceding Memorial Day (May 19–25, 2008) has been designated as National Recreational Water Illness Prevention Week.

The goal of this year’s recognition is to highlight the importance of healthy swimming behaviors in preventing recreational water illnesses (RWIs). State and local health departments across the country investigated more RWI outbreaks in 2007 than ever before. This upsurge is partly caused by an increase in the number of RWI outbreaks caused by *Cryptosporidium* (“Crypto”), a chlorine resistant parasite, and is primarily associated with treated recreational water venues, such as pools and water parks. While seven RWI outbreaks caused by Crypto were identified in 2004, The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) received at least 18 preliminary reports on such outbreaks for 2007.

Organisms such as E. coli, *Cryptosporidium*, and *Giardia*, which may be found in human and animal feces, can cause recreational water illnesses. Symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramps, and fever. Skin, ear, eye, and urinary tract infections can also result from swimming in contaminated water. Recreational water illnesses have been associated with water parks, pools, hot tubs, rivers, lakes, streams, and oceans. Chlorine-treated water has germ killing abilities, but the chlorine takes time to work, and even a well-maintained pool may transmit *Cryptosporidium*.

Awareness of recreational water illnesses (RWIs) and healthy swimming behaviors play an important role in stopping transmission of RWIs. Germs on and in swimmers’ bodies end up in the water and can make other people sick. Even healthy swimmers can get sick from RWIs, but the young, the elderly, pregnant women, and immunosuppressed persons are especially at risk. RWIs can be severe for people in these populations.

“Recreational water venues are great places for fun and exercise,” Laura Hendley, Environmental Health Specialist for the Lewis & Clark City-County Health Department advises, “But to make swimming this summer a healthy experience, swimmers need to adopt behaviors that reduce the risk of recreational water illnesses. Most recreational water illnesses are diarrheas, so remember, *don’t drink the water!*”

Specific actions you can take to promote healthy swimming include (These rules apply to spray parks as well, since spray parks use re-circulated water, not fresh water.):

1. Do not swim when you have diarrhea.
2. Do not swallow pool water or get pool water in your mouth.
3. Shower before swimming (children too).
4. Wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers.
5. Take children on bathroom breaks or change diapers often.
6. Change children’s diapers in a bathroom, not at poolside.

For more information about National Recreational Water Illness Prevention Week and healthy swimming, contact Laura Hendley, Environmental Health Specialist, at 447-8352 or visit <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming>.

The Lewis & Clark City-County Health Department’s mission is to improve and protect the health of all Lewis & Clark County residents.

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