

Waterborne illness avoidance tips

Written by
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With the warmer weather and increased number of people using recreational water venues, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) encourages local public health officials to be aware of recreational water illness. To date in 2012 there have been over 130 illnesses associated with recreational water outbreaks in Minnesota, the largest number of recreational water-associated illnesses in 10 years.

Germs on and in swimmers' bodies end up in the water and can make other people sick. Even healthy swimmers can get sick from recreational water illnesses, but the young, elderly, pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems are especially at risk.

Specific actions people can take to promote healthy swimming include:

- Don't swim when you have diarrhea.
- Don't swallow pool or lake water.
- Practice good hygiene. Shower with soap before swimming.
- Wash your hands thoroughly after using the toilet or changing diapers.
- Take children on bathroom breaks or change diapers often.
- Change diapers in a bathroom, not at poolside or beachside.

From 2000 to 2011, 24 swimming pool outbreaks and 15 beach outbreaks were identified in Minnesota, resulting in over 900 illnesses. The most common symptom of recreational water illness is diarrhea, which frequently is severe enough to result in hospitalization. Symptoms may not begin until a week or more after swimming.

The parasite *Cryptosporidium* is one of the most common waterborne disease agents. *Cryptosporidium*, a chlorine resistant parasite, can survive and be transmitted even in a properly maintained pool.

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To report a suspected waterborne illness, call the Foodborne and Waterborne Illness Hotline at 1-877-366-3455. For more information regarding waterborne illness, contact Trisha Robinson at 651-201-5414.

For more information about Healthy Swimming, including health promotion materials, see the Centers for Disease Control Healthy Swimming Web page at: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater>
Source: Minnesota Department of Health