

News Release

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Health officials remind Minnesotans to practice healthy swimming behaviors this summer

Germs on and in swimmers' bodies can make people sick; action steps can help prevent illness

Healthy swimming behaviors play an important role in stopping the spread of illnesses through recreational water, according to the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH).

"Germs on and in swimmers' bodies end up in the water and can make other people sick," said Dr. Kirk Smith, waterborne disease supervisor for MDH. "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 you can take to promote healthy swimming include:

- Do not go swimming if you have been ill with diarrhea in the past two weeks.
- Avoid swallowing water or getting water in your mouth.
- Shower before swimming.
- Wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers.
- Take children on bathroom breaks or change diapers often.
- Change children's diapers in a bathroom, not at poolside or beachside.

From 2000 to 2008, 20 swimming pool outbreaks and 13 beach outbreaks were

identified in Minnesota.

The parasite *Cryptosporidium*, one of the most common waterborne disease agents, is a chlorine-resistant parasite that can survive and be transmitted even in a properly maintained pool. Three swimming pool outbreaks of cryptosporidiosis occurred in 2008.

For more information about Healthy Swimming, see the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Healthy Swimming Web page at:
www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming.

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