



News Release

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Health Officials Ask Kids Under Age Five to Avoid Pools

Cases of cryptosporidium continue to rise

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) and local health departments are asking public swimming pool managers to take aggressive action to help stop the ongoing outbreak of cryptosporidium infection. Most notably, public health officials are asking managers to restrict children under the age of five from swimming until the outbreak has subsided. Other recommended actions include weekly hyper-chlorination of pools, maintaining a minimum level of chlorination at all times and posting informational materials at every pool.

Over the past month, many counties have seen dramatic increases in cryptosporidium, a parasite that causes long-lasting, often debilitating diarrhea. In a normal year, Utah generally sees about 30 cases throughout the state. This year, the state has confirmed 422 cases and the numbers keep climbing.

“Cryptosporidium is a public health threat, and we hope by recommending these aggressive approaches we can help protect the public and prevent more people from becoming sick,” said Lewis Garrett, director of the Davis County Health Department.

Health officials are also calling on the public to do its part by not taking children under the age of five, or anybody in diapers, to swimming pools. Child care centers are also being asked to avoid recreational water activities and will be instructed in how to prevent child-to-child transmission of the parasite.

“The public must be a proactive partner in helping to stop this outbreak,” said Dr. David Sundwall, UDOH director. “If the cases of cryptosporidium don’t slow down within the next two weeks, we may be forced to consider additional restrictions, such as closing public

pools.”

Although crypto can infect anyone, some groups are more likely to develop more serious illness.

- Young children and pregnant women may be more susceptible to the dehydration resulting from diarrhea and should drink plenty of fluids while ill.
- Anyone with a severely weakened immune system is at risk for more serious disease and should refrain from swimming until the outbreak is over. The symptoms will be more severe and could lead to serious or life-threatening illness. Examples of persons with weakened immune systems include those with HIV/AIDS; cancer and transplant patients who are taking certain immunosuppressive drugs; and those with inherited diseases that affect the immune system.

Officials say the best way to protect yourself and your family from this waterborne illness is to practice good hygiene. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has six suggestions to help you stay safe.

- Don't swim when you have diarrhea, and for two weeks after the disease has cleared.
- Don't swallow the pool water.
- Take a shower before swimming and wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers.
- Take the kids on bathroom breaks and check diapers often.
- Change diapers in a bathroom and not at poolside.
- Wash your child thoroughly (especially the rear end) with soap and water before swimming.

For more information about cryptosporidium, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Web site at: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming/>.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.