



# Swim healthy, stay healthy

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SPRINGFIELD – Healthy and Safe Swimming Week, May 21-27, 2018, is being observed the week before Memorial Day, a day when many pools open for the summer. This year’s national theme is “Swim Healthy. Stay Healthy.” The week is dedicated to educating people on how they can take an active role in protecting themselves and preventing the spread of germs when swimming.

“Swimming is a great physical activity that can help improve your health, as long as you take some simple steps,” said Illinois Department of Public Health Director Nirav D. Shah, M.D., J.D. “When you get to the pool, check if you can see the drain at the bottom of the deep end, and look for safety equipment if a lifeguard is not on duty. Also, remember to shower before getting in the water, and if you are sick or have been sick recently, don’t swim.”

Diarrhea is the most common cause of recreational water illness (RWI). Just one diarrheal or vomiting accident in the water can release millions of germs. If other swimmers swallow a mouthful of the water, it can cause diarrhea lasting up to three weeks. It can be difficult to resolve swimming-related disease outbreaks when infected individuals visit multiple pools or water parks.

Crypto (short for *Cryptosporidium*) is the leading cause of outbreaks linked to pools and water parks. Crypto can survive in an adequately chlorinated pool for more than one week. Other germs that can cause illness include *Giardia*, norovirus, *Shigella*, and *E. coli*. RWIs can also be caused by chemicals added to treat water. Other common RWIs include skin, ear, respiratory, eye, neurologic, and wound infections.

Here are some tips swimmers should take.

- Don’t swim or let your kids swim if they have or have had diarrhea in the past two weeks. If there is an accident, let the pool operator know.
- Try not to get water in your mouth.
- Check out the latest pool inspection report and do your own [mini-inspection](#).

- Take kids on bathroom breaks every 60 minutes.
- Check diapers every 30–60 minutes and change them in a bathroom or diaper-changing area—not waterside—to keep germs away from the water.
- Shower before you get in the water. Rinsing off in the shower for just one minute helps get rid of most stuff that might be on swimmer’s body.

Swimming in lakes and other natural bodies of water comes with a unique set of risks such as amoeba and algae. To reduce your chances of becoming ill, try to limit the amount of water up your nose by holding your nose or using nose clips when diving or water skiing. Avoid putting your head underwater and don’t stir up mud and scum while swimming in warm freshwater areas. If you see that the beach is closed, stay out of it. Don’t swim, water ski, or boat in areas where the water is discolored or where you see foam, scum, or mats of algae on the water’s surface.

Swimming safety is also important. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about ten people die from unintentional drowning every day. Of these, two are children aged 14 years and younger. There are precautions you can take to help prevent drowning.

- Know how to swim and do not swim beyond your limits.
- Learn CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation).
- Use lifejackets when boating.
- Avoid drinking alcohol before or during swimming, boating, or water skiing.

To check the status of a swimming facility licensed by IDPH, use the [IDPH Swimming Facility Search](#) on our website. To learn about beach closures, advisories, and test results, check the online [Illinois Beach Guard System](#).