

Summer Swim Season Starts

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SPRINGFIELD – Memorial Day weekend is when many pools and beaches open for the unofficial start to summer. It is important people know how they can protect themselves and prevent the spread of germs when swimming.

“Swimming is a great physical activity that can help improve your health, but there are steps everyone should take to help prevent the risk of illness and injury that may accompany swimming,” said Illinois Department of Public Health Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike. “Swimmers need to take an active role in helping protect themselves and preventing the spread of germs. We all share the water we swim in, and we each need to do our part to help keep ourselves and our families and friends healthy.”

Diarrhea is the most common cause of recreational water illness (RWI). Just one diarrheal 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.

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.

Why It Is Important.	Prevention Steps
<p>Illnesses caused by the germs in pools and hot tubs</p> <p>A new CDC report shows that during 2015–2019, >200 outbreaks were linked to pools, hot tubs, and water playgrounds.</p> <p><i>Cryptosporidium</i> (or Crypto) can make swimmers sick if they swallow just a mouthful of contaminated water. Although most germs are killed within minutes by chlorine or bromine at the recommended levels, Crypto is a germ that can survive in properly treated water for more than 7 days.</p>	<p>Before getting in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don’t swim or let others swim if sick with diarrhea.• Shower for at least 1 minute before you get into the water to remove dirt or anything else on your body. <p>o Chlorine mixed with dirt, sweat, pee, and poop creates chemicals that make swimmers’ eyes red and sting.</p> <p>o When chlorine mixes with dirt, sweat, pee, and poop, there is less chlorine available to kill germs.</p> <p>Once you are in:</p>

For more info, visit the [Healthy Swimming website](#).

- Don't swallow the water.
- Don't pee or poop in the water.
- Take kids on frequent bathroom breaks and check diapers every hour.
- Change diapers away from the water to keep germs from getting in.

Dry ears thoroughly with a towel after swimming.

Drowning

Each day, approximately two children less than 15 years old die from drowning. Drowning is the leading cause of injury-related death for children 1–4 years old.

While children are at highest risk, anyone can drown.

For more info, visit the [Unintentional Drowning: Get the Facts website](#).

Stay safe in and around the water

- Make sure everyone has basic swimming and water safety skills.
- Use U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets as directed.
- Designate a responsible adult to closely and constantly supervise swimmers.
- Know how to recognize and respond to a

	swimmer in distress and how to perform CPR.
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Swimming in lakes and other natural bodies of water comes with a unique set of risks associated with amoeba and algae. To reduce your chances of becoming ill, try to limit the amount of water entering 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.

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](#).