

Cryptosporidium

Enjoy the water but be safe this swimming season.

Cryptosporidiosis is a disease caused by a very small parasite. Both the parasite and the disease are often called Crypto. Crypto cysts are much more resistant to chlorine in swimming pool water than most germs.

What are the symptoms of Crypto?

Most people who get Crypto have watery diarrhea, stomach cramps, an upset stomach, or slight fever. In some people the diarrhea can be so severe that they lose weight. Other people with crypto may have no symptoms.

How is Crypto spread by swimming?

Most outbreaks of diarrhea associated with pools, spas, splash pads, or interactive fountains appear to be related to fecal contamination of the water by someone who is ill with diarrhea. In addition, tiny amounts of fecal matter are rinsed off all swimmers' bottoms as they swim through the water. Infectious diarrhea can contain hundreds of millions to a billion parasites in a single fecal accident.

For any public swimming facility, continuous filtration and disinfection of water should reduce the risk of spreading illness. However, patrons may still be exposed to crypto during the time it takes for chlorine to work or for water to be recycled through filters. Much higher levels of chlorine or contact time periods are required to destroy crypto cysts.

How can I protect myself and my family from Crypto?

Pool operators are working hard to prevent the spread of Crypto. However they can only do so much. It is important that we make decisions that will protect one another. Following these simple steps protects your family and others.

- Please don't swim when you have diarrhea, or have had diarrhea in the past two weeks. This is especially important for those in diapers. You can spread germs in the water that will make others sick.
- Please don't swallow pool water. In fact, avoid getting water in your mouth.
- Please take a cleansing shower before swimming and wash your hands with soap after using the bathroom or changing a diaper.
- Please take your children on bathroom breaks often or change diapers often. Waiting to hear "I have to go" may be too late.

- Please change diapers in a bathroom and not at poolside. Germs can spread to surfaces and objects in and around the pool and spread illness.

- Please wash your child thoroughly (especially the rear end) with soap and water before swimming. Everyone has invisible amounts of fecal matter on their bottoms that end up in the pool.

Do swim diapers or swim pants protect against the spread of Crypto?

The use of swim diapers and swim pants may give many parents and pool staff a false sense of security regarding fecal contamination. Waterproof swimwear with waist and leg openings fitted such that they are in contact with the waist or leg around the entire circumference are most effective, and are required to prevent the spread of the disease.

Little is known on how well they are able to keep feces or infection-causing germs from leaking into the pool. Even though diapers or swim pants may hold in some solid feces, they are not leak proof and can still contaminate the pool water.

Be aware that swim diapers and swim pants are not a solution for a child with diarrhea or a substitute for frequent diaper changing. It is recommended that you change your child often and make frequent trips to the toilet while swimming.