

Notice to Readers: Recreational Water Illness Prevention Week --- May 23--30, 2005

The first National Recreational Water Illness Prevention Week will be held May 23--30, 2005, at the start of the annual swimming season, to raise awareness of the potential for spread of infectious disease at swimming venues and to help improve prevention efforts. An estimated 8.1 million swimming pools are in residential or public use in the United States (1). Each year, U.S. residents make an estimated 360 million visits to recreational water venues such as swimming pools, spas, lakes, and oceans, making swimming the second-most popular physical activity (walking is first) in the country and the most popular among children (2). However, recreational water use also can be associated with drowning, injury, and the spread of infectious diseases.

Recreational water illnesses (RWIs) are spread by swallowing, breathing, or having contact with contaminated water from swimming pools, spas, lakes, rivers, or oceans (3). The most commonly reported RWI is diarrhea caused by pathogens such as *Cryptosporidium*, *Giardia*, *Shigella*, and *Escherichia coli* O157:H7. Children, pregnant women, and persons with compromised immune systems are at greatest risk from infection with these pathogens. Infection with *Cryptosporidium* can be life threatening in persons with weakened immune systems (4). Other RWIs can cause various symptoms, including skin, ear, eye, respiratory, and neurologic infections.

A steady increase in reported diarrheal RWI outbreaks during 1984--2002 has resulted in approximately 19,000 illnesses (5). This increase is likely the result of a combination of increased water usage, improved outbreak detection, and increased disease transmission. The spread of RWIs is facilitated by emergence of chlorine-resistant pathogens such as *Cryptosporidium* (5), poor pool maintenance (6), and low public awareness of the problem (7). Recommendations for public swimming pools include improved operation, training, and public education to protect swimmers from infectious disease transmission. Additional information for public health professionals, aquatics staff members, and the general public is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming>.

References

1. United States swimming pool market, 2005. Pool and spa marketing reference directory. Markham, Canada: Hubbard Marketing & Publishing Limited; March 2005:19--21.
2. US Bureau of the Census. Statistical abstract of the United States: 1995. 115th ed. Washington, DC: US Bureau of the Census; 1995.
3. Castor ML, Beach MJ. Reducing illness transmission from disinfected recreational water venues: swimming, diarrhea, and the emergence of a new public health concern. *Pediatr Infect Dis J* 2004;23:866--70.
4. Chen XM, Keithly JS, Paya CV, LaRusso NF. Cryptosporidiosis. *N Engl J Med* 2002;346:1723--31.
5. Yoder J, Blackburn B, Levy DA, Craun GF, Calderon RL, Beach MJ. Surveillance for waterborne-disease outbreaks associated with recreational water---United States, 2001--2002. In: *Surveillance Summaries*, October 22, 2004. *MMWR* 2004;53(No. SS-8):1--22.
6. [CDC. Surveillance data from swimming pool inspections: selected states and counties---United States, May--September 2002. *MMWR* 2003; 52:513--6.](#)
7. McClain J, Bernhardt JM, Beach MJ. Assessing parents' perception of children's risk for recreational water illnesses. *Emerg Infect Dis* 2005; 11:670--6.

and Human Services.

References to non-CDC sites on the Internet are provided as a service to *MMWR* readers and do not constitute or imply endorsement of these organizations or their programs by CDC or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. CDC is not responsible for the content of pages found at these sites. URL addresses listed in *MMWR* were current as of the date of publication.

Disclaimer All *MMWR* HTML versions of articles are electronic conversions from ASCII text into HTML. This conversion may have resulted in character translation or format errors in the HTML version. Users should not rely on this HTML document, but are referred to the electronic PDF version and/or the original *MMWR* paper copy for the official text, figures, and tables. An original paper copy of this issue can be obtained from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO), Washington, DC 20402-9371; telephone: (202) 512-1800. Contact GPO for current prices.

****Questions or messages regarding errors in formatting should be addressed to mmwrq@cdc.gov.**

Date last reviewed: 5/18/2005

[HOME](#) | [ABOUT *MMWR*](#) | [MMWR SEARCH](#) | [DOWNLOADS](#) | [CONTACT](#)
[POLICY](#) | [DISCLAIMER](#) | [ACCESSIBILITY](#)

SAFER • HEALTHIER • PEOPLE™

Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Rd, MailStop K-95, Atlanta, GA 30333,
U.S.A



Department of Health
and Human Services