



WILL COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT & COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

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News media calls to Vic Reato: Media Services Manager at (815)727-5088.

Agency Website: www.willcountyhealth.org

Twitter: WillCoHealth

BEWARE OF RECREATIONAL WATER ILLNESSES

JOLIET – Americans will make more than 360 million trips to recreational water venues during 2010, and many of those visits will result in an unpleasant illness.

Outbreaks of Recreational Water Illness (RWI) will sicken thousands this spring, summer and fall. More than 60 percent of illnesses linked to public swimming pools, water parks and beaches are caused by *Cryptosporidium*, a chlorine-resistant parasite that can produce diarrhea, cramps, nausea and fever from two-to-10 days after becoming infected.

Most people with healthy immune systems will recover within a few days without treatment. However, dehydration caused by RWIs can be serious for infants, children, pregnant women, and other individuals with compromised immunity.

The National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention investigated 40 large RWI outbreaks during 2008. Only a fraction of RWI outbreaks are large enough to warrant CDC involvement, but the frequency of waterborne investigations conducted by the CDC increased by 171 percent from 2003 through 2007. These outbreaks underscore the need to educate people about RWI prevention to help insure a healthier swimming experience.

Cryptosporidium and other potentially dangerous pathogens are introduced to recreational water by swimmers who are ill with diarrhea. Healthy swimmers are exposed when they swallow contaminated water.

The Will County Health Department reminds area residents that healthy swimming behaviors can help to reduce the potential for RWIs. Avoiding the water when you feel ill, or are recovering from a recent illness, can be critical to limiting the potential for RWI transmission.

Persons with diarrhea should avoid swimming for two weeks. Swimmers should also avoid swallowing water and should always shower before entering the pool or spa.

As always, hand washing is the single most important thing you can do to protect your health. Washing your hands is especially critical after toilet use, or changing diapers.



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Main Office
501 Ella Avenue
Joliet, IL 60433
Ph 815.727.8480
Fx 815.727.8484

Community Health Center
1106 Neal Avenue
Joliet, IL 60433
Ph 815.727.8670
Fx 815.727.8852

Eastern Branch Office
44 Towncenter
University Park, IL 60466
Ph 815.727.8803
Ph 708.534.0800
Fx 708.534.3455

Northern Branch Office
323 Quadrangle Dr.
Bolingbrook, IL 60440
Ph 630.679.7000
Fx 630.679.7015

There are more than 7.4 million swimming pools and 1,000 water parks in the U.S. Swimming is a great form of exercise and a good way to beat the heat, but a little common sense is necessary to help maximize the fun.

National RWI Prevention Week is May 24-30. CDC hopes the annual event will help increase community awareness and minimize RWIs by promoting healthy swimming practices.

For more information about avoiding recreational water illnesses, visit www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming.