



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Avoiding Swimming Sickness

Outbreaks Associated with Treated Recreational Water — United States, 2000-2014

Recorded: May 22, 2018; posted: May 24, 2018

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Dr. Kathleen Dooling] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Kathleen Dooling.

As summer approaches, people will be looking for places to relax and stay cool. Pools, water parks, and other recreational water venues are popular destinations, but they can be sources of serious illness.

Ashley Andujar is with CDC's National Center for Emerging Zoonotic Infectious Diseases. She's joining us today to discuss ways to stay safe while going swimming this summer. Welcome to the show, Ashley.

[Ashley Andujar] Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here.

[Dr. Dooling] Ashley, how common are outbreaks at pools and other recreational water venues?

[Ashley Andujar] CDC found that during 2000 through 2014, nearly 500 waterborne disease outbreaks were linked to pools, hot tubs, and water playgrounds, and these outbreaks caused more than 27,000 illnesses and eight deaths.

[Dr. Dooling] What are the most common causes of waterborne outbreaks?

[Ashley Andujar] There are several germs found in water that can make people sick. The parasite *Cryptosporidium*, or crypto for short, causes most of the outbreaks. Other bacteria that are common are *Legionella* and *Pseudomonas*, and crypto can survive for days, even in properly chlorinated pools and water playgrounds. In comparison, most germs are killed within minutes.

[Dr. Dooling] How does the water become contaminated?

[Ashley Andujar] Crypto gets in pools and water playgrounds when someone who is sick with it has diarrhea and gets in the water. Other swimmers can get sick if they swallow the contaminated water.

[Dr. Dooling] How can parents or other bathers determine if water is safe?

[Ashley Andujar] Swimmers can check out the inspection scores for public pools, hot tubs, and water playgrounds online or at the venue, besides the pool. People can also do their own mini-inspections and use test strips to check if the water's bromine or free-chlorine level and pH are

correct. Most super stores, hardware stores, and pool supply stores sell pool and hot tub strips and they're usually around \$10 for 100 strips.

[Dr. Dooling] What precautions should swimmers take before swimming in a pool or water park?

[Ashley Andujar] To help protect your family and friends in the water, don't swim or let your kids swim if they're sick with diarrhea. Once in the water, don't swallow the water. Swallowing just a mouthful of contaminated water with diarrhea-causing germs can make you sick. Parents should also check diapers every hour and change them away from the water. As swimmers, we all share the water we swim in, so share the fun, not the germs.

[Dr. Dooling] Where can listeners get more information about pool safety?

[Ashley Andujar] Listeners can go to cdc.gov/healthyswimming.

[Dr. Dooling] Thanks, Ashley. I've been talking today with Ashley Andujar about ways to stay healthy when swimming this summer.

Parents with young children who have diarrhea should not allow their children to swim or play in the water. In addition, bathers should check the inspection scores of pools and water parks and can conduct mini-inspections using test strips before getting in the water.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Kathleen Dooling for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.