Facts About Crypto and Swimming Pools

What is Crypto and how can it affect me?

"Crypto" (krip-TOE), short for *Cryptosporidium*, is a **germ that causes diarrhea**. This germ is found in the fecal matter of a person who has been infected by Crypto. It has a tough outer shell that allows it to survive for a long time in the environment. It can survive for days even in properly chlorinated pools.

Crypto is one of the most common causes of recreational water illness (disease caused by germs spread through pool water) in the United States and can cause prolonged diarrhea (for 1–2 weeks). It can make anyone sick, but certain groups of people are more likely to become seriously ill when infected with Crypto:

- Young children
- Pregnant women
- Individuals with weakened immune systems

How is Crypto spread in pools?

Crypto is **spread by swallowing water** that has been contaminated with fecal matter containing Crypto.

You share the water—and the germs in it—with **every person** who enters the pool. If one person infected with Crypto has diarrhea in the water, the water can be contaminated with tens or hundreds of millions of germs. Swallowing even a small amount of pool water that has been contaminated with the Crypto germ can make you sick.

Crypto can also be spread by swallowing contaminated water from water parks, interactive fountains, water play areas, hot tubs, lakes, rivers, springs, ponds, streams, and oceans.

How do I protect myself, my family, and other swimmers?

Take action! Because Crypto can stay alive for days even in well-maintained pools, stopping the germ from getting there in the first place is essential.

Steps for Healthy Swimming

Keep the pee, poop, sweat, and dirt out of the water!

- Stay out of the water if you have diarrhea.
- Shower before you get in the water.
- Don't pee or poop in the water.
- Don't swallow the water.

Every hour—everyone out!

- Take kids on bathroom breaks.
- Check diapers, and change them in a bathroom or diaper changing area—not poolside—to keep germs away from the pool.
- Reapply sunscreen.
- Drink plenty of fluids.

SWIMMERS AND PARENTS

For more information about Crypto, visit www.cdc.gov/crypto

For more information on preventing illness and injury at the pool, visit www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming

POOL OPERATORS

For guidelines and resources on how to prevent Crypto and other germs from contaminating the water, visit www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/audience-aquatics-staff.html

www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/rwi/illnesses/cryptosporidium.html

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