

Hendricks County Health Department



Environmental Health

355 South Washington Street #210
Danville, IN 46122
Phone (317) 745-9217
Fax (317) 745-9218

Nursing

355 South Washington Street #211
Danville, IN 46122
Phone (317) 745-9222
Fax (317) 745-9383

Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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CONTACT: Jenna Prihoda (Meadows)
(317) 745-9618

MAKE HEALTHY AND SAFE SWIMMING A PRIORITY THIS SUMMER

May 22-28 is National Healthy and Safe Swimming Week

HENDRICKS COUNTY- As the weather warms up and summer approaches, Hendricks County residents are beginning to enjoy swimming and other water based activities. According to the CDC, just 2.5 hours of water based physical activities per week has great health benefits. Along with these benefits, it is important to be aware of illness and injury that can occur due to water based activity. With water can come various forms of illness and injury, including illnesses due to germs that can be present in water, injury due to mishandling pool chemicals, and deaths as a result of drowning.

“Cryptosporidium, which is also known as “Crypto”, is a parasite that causes diarrheal disease,” explains Julie Haan, Director of Environmental Health at the Hendricks County Health Department. “Crypto spreads in water and is not easily killed by chlorine. What most people don’t realize is that even in a pool that has been properly maintained, Crypto can live for up to 10 days. This is why it is crucial to shower before swimming and to stay out of pools if you have recently had diarrhea.”

Because chlorine and other disinfectants can’t kill all germs instantly, it is important to prevent germs from entering the pool in the first place. In order to keep water safe, the CDC recommends every swimmer does the following:

- Stay out of the water if you have diarrhea or have had diarrhea in the past 2 weeks
- Shower before you get in the water
- Do not use the bathroom in the water
- Do not swallow the water
- Take children to the bathroom every hour to prevent accidents in the water
- Check diapers regularly and change them in the bathroom or diaper changing area, away from the pool

In addition to illness due to water, injuries can also occur due to mishandling pool chemicals. Each year the mishandling of pool chemicals by operators of public pools and residential/backyard pool or hot tub/spa owners leads to 3,000–5,000 visits to emergency departments across the United States. Pool operators and residential pool owners should:

- Always read and follow directions on product labels, including wearing appropriate safety equipment as directed
- Secure pool chemicals to keep out of the reach of children and animals
- Add pool chemicals poolside only when directed by product label and when no one is in the water
- Never mix pool chemicals with each other, particularly chlorine products and acid

- Pre-dissolve pool chemicals only when directed by label

The Health Department is doing their part to make sure public and semi-public pools and spas, such as those at local water parks, apartment complexes, neighborhoods, and hotels, are safe for residents to use. The Environmental Health Department hosts an annual pool school for public and semi-public pool operators to educate pool operators on the state pool code and local policies, and for training on how to test and balance a pool's water chemistry.

In addition to the pool school, the department's Environmental Health Specialists conduct unannounced inspections of outdoor pools every two weeks throughout the summer, and indoor pools monthly year-round. Inspection reports are posted on the Health Department's website, www.co.hendricks.in.us/health, the day after a pool or spa is inspected.

The last thing the Health Department wants to emphasize is the importance of keeping inexperienced swimmers safe in the water, especially young children. Drowning is a leading cause of injury and death for children ages 1-4 years old. "It's important to always provide continuous and attentive supervision of children who are swimming or around a pool. It's also important to prevent access to water when a pool is not in use, such as using a pool cover or installing a fence," says Jenna Prihoda, Public Health Education Specialist.

"Each Hendricks County resident plays an important role in preventing illnesses and injuries linked to the water we share and swim in, this summer and year-round. With healthy swimming practices, safe handling of pool chemicals, and proactive steps to prevent drowning from taking place, swimming can be a safe and enjoyable activity for all ages this summer," concludes Julie Haan.

For more information about pool health and safety, visit the CDC's Healthy Swimming and Recreational Water webpage at www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/, the Indiana State Department of Health's Recreational Water webpage at www.in.gov/isdh/25828.htm, or www.poolsafely.gov.

The Hendricks County Health Department can provide information on pool safety to pool operators and the public. For more information on pool inspections and programming in Hendricks County, contact the Hendricks County Health Department Environmental Health Division at (317) 745-9217