



RECREATIONAL WATER ILLNESSES (RWI'S)

Recreational Water Illnesses, or RWI's, are diseases caused by germs that are spread through contaminated water such as pools, hot tubs, splash pads, lakes, rivers, oceans, etc. RWI's can be especially risky for people with compromised immune systems.

TO PREVENT A RWI INFECTION, SWIMMERS SHOULD:

- Keep water out of your mouth while swimming. Most RWI's occur after accidentally ingesting contaminated water.
- Thoroughly wash your hands after swimming and before eating or drinking.
- Dry your ears after you swim.
- Do not swim if you have diarrhea to prevent others from becoming ill.

TYPES OF RWI'S:

CRYPTOSPORIDIOSIS "CRYPTO"

WHAT IS IT? Cryptosporidiosis, or "Crypto", is an illness caused by a single-celled parasite called *Cryptosporidium* and is one of the most common causes of waterborne disease in humans in the United States.

HOW DO YOU BECOME INFECTED? Infection occurs after swallowing water or food that is contaminated with the parasite or by touching your mouth with contaminated hands or objects.

SYMPTOMS include watery diarrhea, stomach cramping/pain, nausea, vomiting, low-grade fever, loss of appetite, dehydration, and weight loss. Symptoms usually appear around one week after infection and last 1-2 weeks.



GIARDIASIS

WHAT IS IT? Giardiasis is an illness caused by a single-celled parasite called *Giardia*.

Giardiasis is another one of the most common causes of waterborne disease in the United States.

HOW DO YOU BECOME INFECTED? The most common way people become sick with the *Giardia* parasite is by swallowing contaminated drinking or recreational water. It can also spread from person to person, through animals, or through contaminated food or objects.

SYMPTOMS usually appear 1-2 weeks after infection and may include diarrhea, abdominal cramps, gas, nausea, weight loss, and dehydration. Symptoms last 2-6 weeks or longer.

SHIGELLOSIS

WHAT IS IT? Shigellosis is an illness caused by *Shigella* bacteria.

HOW DO YOU BECOME INFECTED? Infection occurs after swallowing contaminated water or food or by putting something in your mouth that is contaminated with the bacteria.

SYMPTOMS begin shortly after infection (1-2 days) and may include diarrhea (sometimes bloody), fever, nausea, and stomach cramps. Symptoms typically last for about a week.



ESCHERICHIA COLI (E. COLI)

WHAT IS IT? A group of bacteria called *Escherichia coli* (*E. Coli* for short) causes illness.

HOW DO YOU BECOME INFECTED? Infection occurs after eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water. Elevated *E. Coli* levels in water is usually caused by sewage overflows, failing sewage systems, polluted storm water, or agricultural runoff.

SYMPTOMS appear 1 to 10 days after exposure and may include severe stomach cramps, diarrhea (often bloody), vomiting, and fever. Serious complications from the illness can occur, however most people recover within 5 to 7 days.

NAEGLERIA FOWLERI

WHAT IS IT? *Naegleria fowleri* is a rare disease caused by a single-celled living organism commonly occurred to as the "brain-eating ameba". The organism is naturally occurring in soil and warm freshwater such as rivers, lakes, etc.

HOW DO YOU BECOME INFECTED? *Naegleria fowleri* can infect people when water containing the organism enters the body through the nose and travels to the brain where it destroys tissue. Infection cannot occur after ingesting contaminated water.

SYMPTOMS appear 1-9 days after nasal exposure and include severe frontal headache, fever, nausea, vomiting, stiff neck, seizures, altered mental status, hallucinations, and coma. The disease is generally fatal.

IF YOU THINK YOU MAY BE ILL WITH A RECREATIONAL WATER ILLNESS, CONTACT YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER.