



University of California
Cooperative Extension
Tulare County

Agriculture and Natural Resources



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PROTECT YOUR FAMILY AT THE POOL THIS SUMMER

This summer, swimming pools are filled with millions of people having fun and staying cool. But did you know that germs can contaminate swimming water even if it is treated with chlorine? Learning about recreational water illnesses (RWIs), which are spread by swimming in contaminated water, such as swimming pools, waterparks, lakes and the ocean, can protect you from illness. RWIs are caused by germs like "Crypto" (KRIP-toe, short for Cryptosporidium), Giardia (gee-ARE-dee-uh), E. coli 0157:H7, and Shigella (Shi-GE-luh) and are spread by accidentally swallowing water that has been contaminated with fecal matter. Remember, you share the water with everyone in the pool.

Germs causing RWIs are killed by chlorine, but chlorine doesn't work right away. It takes time to kill germs. Plus, some germs like Crypto are resistant to chlorine and can live in pools for days. That is why even the best maintained pools can spread illness. Healthy swimming behaviors are needed to protect you and your family from RWIs and will help stop germs from getting in the pool in the first place.

Here are six "P-L-E-As" that promote healthy swimming, provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Healthy Swimming Project:

- ▶ PLEASE don't swim when you have diarrhea. This is especially important for kids in diapers. You can spread germs into the water and make other people sick.
- ▶ PLEASE don't swallow pool water. In fact, try your best to avoid even having water get in your mouth.

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- ▶ PLEASE wash your hands with soap and water after using the toilet or changing diapers. You can protect others by remembering that germs on your body end up in the water.
- ▶ PLEASE take your kids on bathroom breaks often. Waiting to hear "I have to go" may mean that it's too late.
- ▶ PLEASE change diapers in a bathroom and not at poolside. Germs can spread to surfaces and objects in and around the pool.
- ▶ PLEASE wash your child thoroughly (especially his or her rear end) with soap and water before swimming. We all have invisible amounts of fecal matter on our bottoms that end up in the pool.

Visit www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming to take a quick look at what swimmers and pool staff are asking this year.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Infectious Disease, Division of Parasitic Disease. Healthy Swimming 2003 at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming>. June 25, 2003.

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