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LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS STRESS HEALTHY BEHAVIORS AT HOMES AND POOLS

HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO – As the summer pool season comes to a close, Hamilton County Public Health and the Cincinnati Health Department would like to remind residents to follow general hygiene practices at home and at the pool: remember to wash your hands after using the bathroom and do not go swimming if you have or recently had diarrhea.

Cryptosporidiosis, known as Crypto, is a diarrheal illness commonly active during summer months. Because Crypto is easily spread through water – even water that is adequately chlorinated – local health departments monitor cases. Current levels of Crypto are low, but because it is highly contagious residents should practice proper hygiene at pools and homes. During the past two decades, Crypto has become recognized as one of the most common causes of waterborne disease within humans in the United States.

Crypto is an organism that has been found in drinking water, swimming pools, and other water sources. Individuals infected with Crypto develop loose, watery diarrhea, stomach cramps, nausea and a fever. Symptoms may begin two to 10 days after becoming infected, with an average of seven days. Most persons with healthy immune systems will recover without treatment and symptoms will usually last about one to two weeks. However, persons with Crypto can continue to shed the organism in their stool for up to two weeks after their diarrhea ceases. As a result, residents who have had diarrhea should stay out of swimming pools, spas, and hot tubs until two weeks after diarrhea has stopped.

“We want to make sure the remainder of the summer is safe and healthy for everyone,” said Hamilton County Health Commissioner Tim Ingram. “If you visit a pool and you have diarrhea, do not go swimming. We each have a responsibility to prevent Crypto and other Recreational Water Illnesses (RWIs) from spreading in our community.”

Crypto can be very contagious. Touching your mouth with contaminated hands after touching a surface an infected person touched can spread the illness.

“Hand washing is the number one thing you can do to prevent the spread of Crypto and many other communicable diseases,” said Cincinnati Health Commissioner Noble Maseru. “Taking simple precautions in the home and staying out of pools, spas and hot tubs if you’re ill can help prevent Crypto-like illnesses in our community.”

While Crypto is easily spread by swallowing water contaminated by human feces, either from swimming or drinking, it can also be transmitted from person to person if proper hand washing and sanitary procedures are not followed. It is also easily spread in settings such as homes and daycare centers where diapers are changed regularly. The following recommendations can help prevent the spread of Crypto in pools and in homes:

At the pool:

- Don't swim when you have diarrhea. You can spread germs in the water and make other people sick.
- Don't swallow the pool water. In fact, avoid getting water in your mouth.
- Practice good hygiene. Shower before swimming and wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers. Germs on your body end up in the water.
- Take children on bathroom breaks or change diapers often. Waiting to hear "I have to go" may mean that it's too late.
- Change diapers in a bathroom and not at poolside. Germs can spread to surfaces and objects in and around the pool and spread illness.
- Wash your child thoroughly with soap and water before swimming. Everyone has invisible amounts of fecal matter on their bottoms that can end up in the pool.

At home:

- Wash hands after using the bathroom or changing a diaper, touching objects used by others, or exposure to a sick person.
- Young children with diarrheal symptoms should be bathed separately from other children in the household.
- Disinfect bath tub after each use if a household member has diarrheal symptoms.

Further information about Crypto and other RWIs is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov.

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