



PREVENT. PROMOTE. PROTECT.

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NEWS

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Hamilton County Public Health Tracks Increased GI Illness

Hamilton County, OH.....Hamilton County Public Health officials have identified an increased rate of gastrointestinal illness, partially as a result of *Cryptosporidium* (Crypto). “We are currently tracking an up-tick in cases over the past two weeks and watching carefully as our July/August numbers are outpacing results from last year,” according to Tim Ingram, Hamilton County Health Commissioner.

“Though we find Crypto in all parts of the country, we want to make sure the community has information about the illness so people can take appropriate precautions, especially now during swimming season,” Ingram says.

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NEWS

2/4

“Cryptosporidiosis is a diarrheal disease caused by microscopic parasites of the genus *Cryptosporidium*” according to Dr. Steve Bjornson, Hamilton County Public Health Medical Director. “Infected individuals develop loose, watery diarrhea, stomach cramps, nausea and slight fever. Symptoms may begin two to 10 days after becoming infected, with an average of seven days. In persons with healthy immune systems, symptoms usually last one-two weeks. Symptoms may occur in cycles during which a person may seem to get better for a few days and then feel worse again before the illness ends. Most people with healthy immune systems recover without treatment. If you have diarrhea, drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration,” he adds.

Crypto lives in the intestine of infected humans or animals. Millions of Crypto germs can be released in a bowel movement from an infected human or animal. Crypto is spread by:

- Accidentally putting something in your mouth or swallowing something that has come into contact with feces of a person or animal infected with the parasite.
- Swallowing water contaminated with Crypto. Especially during swimming season, potential water sources include swimming pools, hot tubs, Jacuzzis, fountains, lakes, rivers, springs, ponds or streams that can be contaminated with sewage or feces from humans or animals.

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NEWS

3/4

- Eating uncooked food contaminated with crypto.
- Accidentally swallowing Crypto picked up from surfaces such as bathroom fixtures, changing tables, diaper pails or toys contaminated with feces from an infected person.

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. The parasite is found in drinking water and recreational water sources in every region of the country and throughout the world.

“All people are presumed susceptible to infection with Crypto,” Bjornson explains. “However, immuno-compromised persons (those with weak immune systems) may have severe and long lasting illness and should contact their physician for treatment. Additionally, children and pregnant women should talk with their health care providers about preventing dehydration from diarrhea caused by Crypto.”

Though Crypto is contagious, it is also preventable. Hamilton County Public Health suggests following these simple steps to reduce your risk:

- Drink safe water.
- Wash your hands often.
- Practice safer sex.
- Avoid touching farm animals.
- Avoid touching stool from pets.

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NEWS

4/4

- Avoid swallowing water when swimming in oceans, lakes, rivers or pools and when using hot tubs.
- People with diarrheal illness should avoid participation in recreational water activities (i.e. pools, spray and water parks, etc.) for three weeks after onset of symptoms.
- Wash and thoroughly cook food.

For additional information, visit www.hamiltoncountyhealth.org or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention site, www.cdc.gov.

Hamilton County Public Health works to assure the 450,000 citizens living outside the cities of Cincinnati, Norwood, Sharonville and Springdale are safe from disease, injury and contamination.

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