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Make a healthy splash this summer

Public Health reminds people that swallowing water in wading pools, splash pads, pools and spray parks might make you sick.

NEWS

Swallowing water when swimming or playing at a splash pad can make you sick with diarrhea if it is contaminated with germs. Oxford County Public Health & Emergency Services is reminding people about the risks of swallowing water at public pools or splash pads as part of its yearly campaign on recreational water health and safety. The campaign features “Make a Healthy Splash” posters at public pools and splash pads to remind people to stay out of the water if they have diarrhea and to wash babies thoroughly before swimming.

Swallowing water contaminated with feces is still a leading cause of illness from visits to pools and beaches. Don’t drink the water at wading pools, splash pads and pools and don’t sit on the jets.

Diarrhea presents a risk to other swimmers because it takes only trace amounts of fecal matter to make others sick. Some of these germs live only minutes and some survive for days, even in swimming pools with good filtration and disinfection systems.

Not swimming when you have diarrhea is the best way to prevent the spread of recreational water illness. Other steps you can take to protect yourself and others are: use the showers at public pools to rinse off before swimming; wash your hands after using the bathroom or changing a diaper; take children on bathroom breaks and change swimming diapers often; and avoid swallowing pool or beach water.

Illnesses caused by exposure to recreational water can also include skin, ear, respiratory, eye and wound infections. These conditions Recreational water illnesses can cause more serious health complications in children, pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems.

Public Health’s role in helping to prevent illnesses related to recreational water use includes inspecting pools and splash pads in the community to ensure health procedures are followed. Public Health also samples beach water weekly from mid-May to Labour Day to check bacteria levels. Area beaches with high levels of bacteria are posted on site as not safe for swimming. Beach water updates are available online at www.oxfordcounty.ca/health or by phone by dialing 2-1-1.
QUICK FACTS

- CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) says on average people have about 0.14 grams of feces on their bottoms which, when rinsed off, can contaminate recreational water. When someone is ill with diarrhea, their stool can contain millions of germs that can easily contaminate the water in a large pool or water park.

- One of the most common causes of recreational water illness is the parasite *Cryptosporidium*, or “Crypto.” Crypto can survive up to 11 days in a chlorinated swimming pool.

GRAPHICS AVAILABLE

Posters and infographics available on the CDC website:
http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/resources/posters.html#chemical

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OXFORD COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH & EMERGENCY SERVICES works to keep people in our community healthy and safe through programs in prevention, protection and emergency response. Services include family health, immunization, dental health, infectious disease prevention, sexual health, public health inspection, environmental health, healthy lifestyles, emergency services, emergency planning, and other programs that support healthy people living in a healthy environment. Public Health & Emergency Services is part of the County of Oxford. For more information, visit www.oxfordcounty.ca/health or follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/oxfordcountypublichealth.