



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Idaho Public Health Districts

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May 2014

PROTECTING PEOPLE FROM RECREATIONAL WATER ILLNESSES

Each year the week before Memorial Day, National Recreational Water Illness and Injury Prevention Week is observed. Recreational water illnesses (RWIs) are caused by germs such as crypto (short for cryptosporidium), giardia, norovirus, shigella, and E. coli O157:H7 and are spread through contaminated water in swimming pools, water parks, water play areas, hot tubs, decorative water fountains, hot springs, oceans, lakes, and rivers. Local public health (LPH) districts are responsible for inspecting public swimming pools—those open to the public by general invitation (with a fee for use). In the past, we also inspected pools associated with hotels, motels, athletic clubs, condominiums, and other similar facilities. However, these types of pools were written out of Idaho’s pool regulations in 2002, meaning they are no longer required to comply with health and safety regulations that help protect the pools’ users.

Even though LPH has jurisdiction only over public pools, we, along with the Idaho Department of Health & Welfare (IDHW), investigate RWI outbreaks resulting from any recreational water source and educate people on how to protect themselves and their families. Sometimes a RWI outbreak can result in hundreds of man hours being spent by public health staff. Two significant outbreaks in the state illustrate the tremendous amounts of work involved in bringing RWI outbreaks under control and keeping Idahoans safe from RWIs.

2013 Gastroenteritis Outbreak—Middle Fork of the Salmon River:

An outbreak of gastroenteritis among rafters on the Middle Fork of the Salmon River occurred during the summer and fall of 2013. Eastern Idaho Public Health District investigated the outbreak with support from Central District Health Department (CDHD), the United States Forest Service, and the IDHW. The investigation indicated that this outbreak did not have a single cause or source. Public health recommendations were made that included improving hand hygiene and food handling

practices of rafters, frequent disinfection of surfaces with an approved disinfectant for norovirus, staying out of hot springs when ill, and additional treatment (boiling or chemical) to filtered water to inactivate norovirus. Please visit www.phd7.idaho.gov/Infectious%20Disease/middleforkgiillness.html for a more comprehensive summary of how your local public health districts and other state and federal agencies worked together to investigate this outbreak in the wilderness area of Idaho.

Cryptosporidium (Crypto) Outbreaks:

In 2007, outbreaks of crypto occurred across the state. That year, 513 cases were reported—a drastic increase from the 40 cases reported the previous year. Cases spiked again in 2012, when we experienced 267 cases of crypto across the state. When outbreaks such as this happen, local public health staff works with regulated and unregulated facilities alike to help stop the spread of the disease. They facilitate water testing to confirm the disease entity. They work with facility operators to observe their operations, including water disinfection/filtration processes, as well as access to hygiene facilities. When appropriate, they make recommendations on improvements that could be made to help reduce the spread of the illness. LPH staff also provides educational materials to the facilities as well as the public to help promote healthy swimming practices. To read more about one specific crypto outbreak investigation that occurred in Public Health District 4, please visit <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5822a2.htm>.

Swimming and playing in the water is an integral part of living in Idaho. It is public health’s goal to keep the water as clean and safe as possible by ensuring public pools are following health and safety regulations and by educating people about healthy swimming practices—a key component in helping people to continue enjoying Idaho’s water activities without getting ill.

HEALTHY PEOPLE IN HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

PANHANDLE HEALTH DISTRICT (1)	PUBLIC HEALTH - IDAHO NORTH CENTRAL DISTRICT (2)	SOUTHWEST DISTRICT HEALTH (3)	CENTRAL DISTRICT HEALTH (4)	SOUTH CENTRAL PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT (5)	SOUTHEASTERN IDAHO PUBLIC HEALTH (6)	EASTERN IDAHO PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT (7)
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