



## Fact Sheet

### Make a big splash with healthy swimming tips

Swimming in your favorite pool, stream or lake offers hours of refreshing fun, but hidden beneath the sparkling water can lurk germs that cause diarrhea and other recreational water illnesses.

Recreational water illnesses are caused by parasites, bacteria, viruses and other germs that contaminate swimming water. These germs get in creeks and streams from animals, sewage, rainwater runoff, and swimmers. Swimmers also shed germs in swimming pools.

When people get contaminated water in their nose, eyes or mouth, the germs can cause skin rashes, swimmer's ear, gastrointestinal infections, and other illnesses. Diarrhea is the most commonly reported recreational water illness, and can be caused by germs like *Shigella*, *E. coli*, *Giardia*, or *Cryptosporidium*.

Chlorine does kill most germs in less than an hour, if it is maintained properly, but it doesn't kill germs instantly. Some germs, like *Cryptosporidium*, can survive for up to a week, even in chlorinated water.

Help prevent recreational water illnesses by following these simple steps:

- No one should swim if they have diarrhea.
- Don't get water in your ears, face, or mouth or swallow it.
- Shower before swimming and wash your hands after using the bathroom.
- Take your child on frequent bathroom breaks and change diapers often, but not beside the pool.
- Always wash your hands after swimming and before eating or drinking.

For healthy swimming, the best defense is a good offense. You can test the water yourself with simple chlorine test strips available at most superstores or hardware stores.

Learn more by visiting [www.phelpscountyhealth.com](http://www.phelpscountyhealth.com), Facebook, Twitter, or by calling (573) 458-6010. The Phelps/Maries County Health Department – caring for your family, caring for our community, caring for YOU!



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