



Greene County Public Health
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Press Release

For Immediate Release
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Healthy & Safe Swimming Week 2022

GREENE COUNTY, OH—Greene County Public Health officials want to remind families that the week before Memorial Day (May 23-29, 2022) is Healthy and Safe Swimming Week. The goal of Healthy and Safe Swimming Week is to maximize the health benefits of swimming and other water-based activities while minimizing the risk of illness and injury. Each of us can play a role in preventing illnesses and injuries when we swim, play, and relax in the water—this summer and year-round.

Illnesses caused by germs in the places we swim

Germs in the water can make people sick if they swallow just a mouthful of contaminated water. Although most germs are killed within minutes by chlorine or bromine at the recommended levels, the germ *Cryptosporidium* (or Crypto) can survive in properly treated water for more than 7 days. Here are a few simple and effective prevention steps we can all take:

- **Before getting in:**
 - Don't swim or let others swim if sick with diarrhea.
 - Shower for at least 1 minute before you get into the water to remove dirt or anything else on your body.
 - Chlorine mixed with dirt, sweat, pee, and poop creates chemicals that make swimmers' eyes red and sting.
 - When chlorine mixes with dirt, sweat, pee, and poop, there is less chlorine available to kill germs.
- **Once you are in:**
 - Don't swallow the water.
 - Don't pee or poop in the water.
 - Take kids on frequent bathroom breaks and check diapers every hour.
 - Change diapers away from the water to keep germs from getting in.
 - Dry ears thoroughly with a towel after swimming.

Dangers of Drowning

Every day, two children less than 15 years old die from drowning. It is the leading cause of injury death for children 1–4 years old. Help keep swimmers safe in the water by following these steps:

360 Wilson Drive • Xenia, Ohio 45385
(937) 374-5600 • toll free (866) 858-3588 • Fax (937) 374-5675
www.gcph.info



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- Make sure everyone knows how to swim.
- Use U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets appropriately.
- Provide continuous, attentive supervision close to swimmers.
- Know CPR.
- Prevent access to water when pool is not in use.
 - Install and maintain barriers like 4-sided fencing and weight-bearing pool covers.
 - Use locks/alarms for windows and doors.

Injuries caused by mishandling pool chemicals (for pool operators and residential pool owners)

Pool chemicals, like chlorine, are needed to protect swimmers' health. However, mishandling pool chemicals can cause serious injuries. Pool chemical injuries lead to about 4,500 U.S. emergency department visits each year, and over one-third of these preventable injuries are in children or teens. Follow these prevention steps:

- Read and follow directions on product labels.
- Wear appropriate safety equipment, such as goggles and masks, as directed, when handling pool chemicals.
- Secure pool chemicals to protect people and animals.
- Add pool chemicals poolside **ONLY** when directed by product label and when no one is in the water.
- Prevent violent, potentially explosive, reactions.
 - **NEVER** mix different pool chemicals with each other, especially chlorine products with acid.
 - Pre-dissolve pool chemicals **ONLY** when directed by product label.
 - Add pool chemical to water, **NEVER** water to pool chemical.

Harmful Algae and Cyanobacterial Blooms

Algae and cyanobacteria (sometimes called blue-green algae) can overgrow or bloom in warm, nutrient-rich water. Some of these blooms can harm people, animals, and the environment. These events are referred to as a harmful algal or cyanobacterial blooms (HABs).

If harmful algal or cyanobacterial blooms produce toxins, they can cause a variety of symptoms, including skin irritation, coughing, sneezing, diarrhea, stomach pain, numbness, and dizziness. Symptoms vary depending on the type of toxin and the type of exposure, such as skin contact, eating contaminated food, swallowing contaminated water, or breathing in tiny, contaminated droplets or mist.

- When in doubt, stay out!
 - Look for posted signs or other advisories from local public health authorities or beach managers. If the beach is closed or if there is guidance to avoid the water, stay out and keep your pets out!
 - Do not go into or play in water that:
 - Smells bad
 - Looks discolored
 - Has foam, scum, algal mats, or paint-like streaks on the surface
 - Has dead fish or other animals washed up on its shore or beach
 - Keep children and pets from playing in or drinking scummy water.

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- If you or your pets go in water that may have a bloom, rinse yourself and your pets immediately afterward with tap water. Do not let pets lick their fur until they have been rinsed. Pets may have harmful algae, cyanobacteria, or related toxins on their fur if they swim or play in water with a bloom.

Naegleria fowleri “The Brain-eating Ameba”

Naegleria fowleri is a microscopic ameba (a single-celled living organism) that is commonly found in warm freshwater such as in lakes, rivers, and hot springs. If water containing the ameba goes up the nose, the ameba can invade and cause a rare and devastating infection of the brain called primary amebic meningoencephalitis (PAM).

Naegleria fowleri infections are rare. The only certain way to prevent an infection due to swimming is to stay out of freshwater. However, you can reduce your chance of getting an infection by limiting the amount of freshwater going up your nose.

To limit the amount of freshwater going up your nose:

- Hold your nose or use nose clips when taking part in freshwater-related activities.
- Avoid putting your head underwater in hot springs and other bodies of warm freshwater

Remember – NEVER swim alone or impaired. Summer is almost here...so have fun, be safe, and be smart! For more information about healthy and safe swimming, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/>

For more information about Greene County Public Health, visit the website at www.gcph.info or call 937-374-5600.

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