



COUNTY OF POLK
Health Department
www.polkcountyiowa.gov/health

Rick Kozin, Director
1907 Carpenter Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50314
Ph. 515.286.3798
Fax. 515.286.2033

Polk County Health Department News Release

For more information:
Sarah Boese, Public Information Officer
515-286-3895 (office), 515-664-7869 (cell)

For Immediate Release
July 22, 2013

Diarrheal illness common symptom of other parasite diseases

Cyclospora isn't the only parasite that can cause diarrhea and stomach pains. Cryptosporidium is one of the most frequent causes of waterborne disease among humans in the United States. This parasite is most commonly spread through drinking water and recreational water and can cause watery diarrhea, stomach cramps, dehydration, nausea and vomiting with symptoms lasting 1-2 weeks. Most people who have a healthy immune system can manage diarrhea by drinking plenty of fluids and will recover without treatment.

Rick Kozin, Polk County Health Department Director, said "because cryptosporidium is very tolerant to chlorine disinfection, it is not uncommon to see more cases in the summer months if people are not following proper etiquette and safety precautions when in pools and recreational water. This year we're seeing more cases than usual and earlier than usual."

Cryptosporidium can live in the intestine of humans and animals and is passed in the stool of an infected person. A person can get cryptosporidium by coming in contact with the feces of another person who has it. This can happen by changing a diaper or when a person sick with cryptosporidium fails to wash their hands thoroughly after using the restroom then touches an object or prepares food. The parasite can also be found in soil, food, water, or surfaces that have been contaminated with feces from infected humans or animals. A person can become infected by accidentally swallowing the parasite. To prevent the spread of cryptosporidium in pools, fountains and lakes follow these tips:

- Do not swim if you have diarrhea (this is essential for children in diapers). If you have been diagnosed with cryptosporidium or another parasite do not swim for at least 2 weeks after diarrhea stops.
- Shower before entering the water.
- Wash children thoroughly (especially their bottoms) with soap and water after they use the toilet or their diapers are changed and before they enter the water.
- Take children on frequent bathroom breaks and check their diapers often.
- Change diapers in the bathroom, not at the poolside.

"In addition to proper pool etiquette you can reduce your risk of not only cryptosporidium but a range of other illnesses by washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and by washing fruits and vegetables," said Kozin.

Everyone should wash their hands thoroughly often but especially before preparing or eating food, after using the bathroom or changing diapers, and before and after helping someone who has used the bathroom or has diarrhea. Be sure to scrub fruits and vegetables rather than just rinsing with water.

See your health care provider if you suspect you have a parasite illness or if you are in poor health, have a weakened immune system or are pregnant. These people and young children are at higher risk for more severe and prolonged illness or dehydration. To learn more about cryptosporidium visit <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/crypto/>.