

Bacteria and Parasites Lurking this Summer

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Summer is a time to enjoy the sun and the beach, or pool. But along with the fun to be had in the long, hot days ahead, there must be a certain amount of caution exercised. One should be sure and take care to avoid situations in the water that can lead to accidental drowning, as well as observe proper skin care to avoid sunburn and heatstroke.

But other, lesser-known perils can lurk in an innocent-looking pool or lake, such as bacteria and parasites, and as the temperatures climb, so can the risk of dehydration.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has a Web site with much information about dehydration and water-borne illnesses. It can be found at: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming/what.htm>

DEHYDRATION

Dehydration is a serious problem that can lead to several illnesses, and even death, if not

properly treated. Diarrhea and heat sickness can both result from dehydration.

Consuming too much caffeine or sugar such as, having too many soft drinks, teas, or coffee can bring on dehydration. Alcohol especially can dehydrate the body on hot days.

The best sources of water on

a hot day are purified water, Kool-Aid, popsicles, sports drinks such as Gatorade, Pedialyte for children, and decaffeinated tea or coffee. Dairy products such as milk or ice cream can also cause diarrhea for some on extremely hot days, and should be consumed in moderation.

RWIs (recreational water illnesses)

Some RWIs include dermatitis ("hot tub rash") and cryptosporidium, or "crypto" for short, which is a bacteria that causes diarrhea.

Dermatitis is caused by direct skin contact with contaminated water, for example, an improperly maintained hot tub.

The rash, which may turn to pus-filled blisters that crop up around hair follicles, can collect in the folds of skin and/or bathing suits, where it is moist, and bacteria can thrive.

It is best to remove wet swimsuits as soon as possible to avoid "hot tub rash", so that the contamination is not "trapped" within the swimsuit, and close to the skin.

Bromine and chlorine evaporate faster in hot tubs, but the dermatitis germ can be found in any body of water. It is very important to maintain the proper use and level of disinfectant chemicals in the pool or hot tub.

DIARRHEA

Cryptosporidium is a bacteria that causes diarrhea. It can not always be killed with chlorine, because of the fact that it contains a hard outer "shell" that the chemicals do not penetrate.

When a swimmer has diarrhea and accidentally releases it into pool water, the water can become contaminated. Most people carry .14

grams of feces on their backsides.

Usually, a person only becomes infected if the contaminated water is swallowed. Children, pregnant women, and those with weakened immune systems are most susceptible to the Crypto germ.

Most disposable diapers are not designed for swimming, and as a result, leaks occur, which can contaminate the entire pool. Instead, special "swim diapers" should be used.

These diapers do not contain the silicone gel core that regular disposables do, which becomes engorged with water until it bursts, spewing waste and silicone out.

It takes at least an hour for the chlorine in the pool to kill most of the germs and bacteria that accumulate from people and/or animals.

Some ways to avoid getting the Crypto germ are:

- * Not eating food that has been improperly cooked or stored
 - * Washing hands thoroughly with soap and water before eating
 - * Not swallowing pool water
 - * Taking care not to get dehydrated, which can lead to diarrhea.
- Also, decorative fountains are not meant for swimming or wad-

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