



Get the Facts: Preventing Recreational Water Illnesses

What causes recreational water illnesses?

Natural bodies of water can contain harmful germs from human or animal waste and wastewater runoff. Germs can include viruses, bacteria, and parasites like norovirus, *Shigella*, *E. coli*, *Cryptosporidium*, and *Giardia*. Germs can cause a variety of symptoms, including diarrhea, gastrointestinal, skin, ear, respiratory, eye, neurologic and wound infections. The most commonly reported recreational water illness is diarrhea.

Who is at risk for recreational water illness?

People who swallow water or get it in their mouth may get sick. The most commonly reported recreational water illness is diarrhea. More than a thousand people get sick in the US each year from waterborne illness, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

How can I protect myself and my family from recreational water illnesses while swimming in natural waters?

To protect yourself from recreational water illness while swimming in natural waters—

- Don't get water in your mouth.
- Don't prepare food near the water.
- Wash your hands before you eat.
- Shower when you are finished swimming.

Can I get sick from swimming in private or public pools?

Private pools and public swimming pools are generally treated with chlorine. Properly used, chlorine kills most germs that can cause recreational water illnesses (RWI) in less than an hour. However, if a pool is not treated properly, it can harbor germs that can cause recreational water illnesses. You still need to make healthy choices to protect yourself while swimming in pools.

How can I protect myself and my family from recreational water illnesses while swimming in public or private pools?

To protect yourself from recreational water illnesses while swimming in public or private pools—

- Avoid swimming in water with a high bacteria level.
- Avoid getting water in your mouth or swallowing it.
- Wash your hands after swimming and before eating or drinking.
- Don't prepare food near the water.
- Shower or bathe after swimming.
- Protect others by not swimming if you have diarrhea.

Enjoy the cool, natural waters in our county, while protecting yourself with these safety tips. □