



DALLAS COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Zachary S. Thompson, M.A.
Director

John T. Carlo, M.D., M.S.E.
Medical Director/Health Authority

August 8, 2008

Dear Parent:

As you may be aware, we are experiencing an outbreak of Cryptosporidiosis throughout Dallas County. As a preventive measure, Dallas County Health and Human Services would like to make parents aware of symptoms to look out for in children as you prepare for a new school year.

Cryptosporidiosis is a waterborne diarrheal illness caused by microscopic parasites called *Cryptosporidium*. The infection is very contagious, and occurs when a person swallows the parasite in contaminated water or food. Once someone is infected, the parasite lives in the intestine, and passes in the stool for a several weeks. Because of these cases, other patrons at your facility may have been recently exposed to cryptosporidiosis.

To prevent the spread of the disease, everyone should thoroughly wash their hands after using the bathroom or changing diapers, and before preparing or eating food. **Because Crypto can be spread easily through water, persons infected with Crypto should avoid swimming while having diarrhea and for 2 weeks after the diarrhea stops.**

DCHHS has issued the following strong recommendations to protect the public's health:

- Keep children with diarrhea out of child care settings or school until symptoms stop
- Wash your hands with soap and water after using the toilet or changing diapers.
- Do not let children sit on or drink from the water spouts in interactive spray water parks or pools.
- Shower before and after using water parks and pools.
- Do not take pets into pools and spray parks.
- Persons at high risk of developing severe illness, such as those with compromised immune systems, should avoid use of water parks or pools until further notice.

If your child develops symptoms such as diarrhea, fever, nausea, vomiting, stomach cramps, weight loss or dehydration, please consult a healthcare provider for a diagnosis and let him/her know about your potential connection with a Crypto case. Please ask your healthcare provider to contact DCHHS at (214) 819-2004 with your child's test results.

We have included a Crypto Frequently Asked Questions sheet that may answer some common questions. Please let us know how we may offer further assistance. If you should have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us at any time. Thank you.

Sincerely,

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“Crypto” (krip-TOE) Frequently Asked Questions

What is Crypto?

Cryptosporidiosis is a diarrheal disease caused by microscopic parasites of the genus *Cryptosporidium*.

Why should I be concerned about Crypto?

Dallas County Health and Human Services is investigating an outbreak of crypto related to water parks and pools in Dallas County.

How is Crypto spread at aquatic facilities?

Crypto is not spread by contact with blood. Crypto can be spread:

- By swallowing recreational water contaminated with Crypto. Recreational water is water from swimming pools, hot tubs, jacuzzis, fountains, lakes, rivers, springs, ponds, or streams that can be contaminated with sewage or feces from humans or animals.
- By putting something in your mouth or accidentally swallowing something that has come in contact with the stool of a person or animal infected with Crypto.
- By swallowing Crypto picked up from surfaces (such as lounge chairs, picnic tables, bathroom fixtures, changing tables) contaminated with stool from an infected person.

How do I protect myself and my family?

You can protect yourself and your kids from crypto by following these six suggestions:

1. **Please** don't swim when you have diarrhea.
2. **Please** don't swallow the pool water.
3. **Please** practice good hygiene. Take a shower before swimming and wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers.
4. **Please** take your kids on bathroom breaks or check diapers often.

5. **Please** change diapers in a bathroom and not at poolside.
6. **Please** wash your child thoroughly (especially the rear end) with soap and water before swimming.

If diarrhea is gone do I still need to get treated?

No, if the symptoms have stopped, there is no need for treatment. But, **do not go swimming or use spray water parks for at least two weeks after your symptoms have stopped.**

Is this confidential?

Yes, all DCHHS investigations and all information gathered during the course of the investigation is covered by HIPPA and are therefore confidential.

Are they going to test the water?

It depends on each location. However, testing the water alone will not provide any assurance. The recommendation of treatment of the facilities is tied to human case counts.

Can crypto be spread in the bath tub if two children bathe together?

Yes, the risk is the same as if the children were swimming in a pool.



DCHHS Asks



Please Help Keep Our Water Safe

Please don't swim when you have diarrhea. You can spread germs in the water and make other people sick.

Please don't swallow the pool water. In fact, avoid getting water in your mouth.

Please practice good hygiene. Take a shower before swimming and wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers.

Please take your kids on frequent bathroom breaks or check diapers often.

Please change diapers in a bathroom or a diaper-changing area and not at poolside. Germs can spread to surfaces and objects in and around the pool and cause illness.

Please wash your child thoroughly (especially the rear end) with soap and water before swimming. Everyone has invisible amounts of fecal matter on their bottoms that ends up in the pool.



DCHHS Invita



A Mantener Nuestra Agua Limpia

- **Favor** de no nadar cuando tenga diarrea; puede contaminar el agua con gérmenes y hacer que otras personas se enfermen.
- **Favor** de bañar bien a su niño con agua y jabón (especialmente en el trasero) antes de nadar. Todos tenemos cantidades no visibles de heces que pueden pasar a la piscina y causar enfermedades.
- **Favor** de no beber el agua de la piscina. Evite tener agua en su boca.
- **Favor** de practicar buena higiene. Bañese antes de nadar y lave sus manos después de usar el baño o después de cambiar pañales.
- **Favor** de llevar a sus niños con frecuencia al baño o revise los pañales a menudo.
- **Favor** de cambiar los pañales en el baño o área designada; pero no alrededor de la piscina. Gérmenes se pueden regar en las superficies y objetos alrededor de la piscina, causando enfermedades.

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