



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 Educator:

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 is contacting child care providers and schools to make them 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:

- 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 you have a pool at your day care, Initiate control measures recommended for Cryptosporidium, such as hyperchlorination protocols for pools and water facilities. These measures may need to be undertaken on a weekly basis. A copy of the CDC guidelines is included.

We have included a CDC Fact Sheet outlining control measures for child care settings, a sample letter to parents, a Crypto Frequently Asked Questions sheet and flyers that may posted at your facility and/or distributed to your parents to help raise awareness of this issue.

If you or anyone in your daycare center have diarrhea, please consult a healthcare provider for a diagnosis and let him/her know about your potential connection with this Crypto outbreak. Please report cases of diarrheal illness which are possibly linked to use of your day care center immediately to DCHHS at (214) 819-2004. If you should have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us at any time. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Wendy Chung, MD, MSPH
Chief Epidemiologist
214-819-2056
wchung@dallascounty.org



Control Measures for the Child Care Setting During an Outbreak of Cryptosporidiosis

Cryptosporidiosis is a gastrointestinal illness, caused by the parasite, *Cryptosporidium*. This disease is a common cause of diarrhea in children, especially in child care settings. The hallmark symptom of cryptosporidiosis is watery diarrhea, which might be accompanied by stomach ache, nausea and vomiting, fever, and a general sick feeling. Healthy people who contract cryptosporidiosis almost always get better without any treatment but treatment is available by prescription. An unusual feature of cryptosporidiosis is that some people seem to get better only to have the diarrhea come back in a few days. Symptoms can come and go for up to 30 days, but usually subside in 1 to 2 weeks. However, cryptosporidiosis can cause severe illness in persons with compromised immune systems, such as those with HIV infection or those taking drugs that suppress the immune system.

Because *Cryptosporidium* is in feces, anything that gets contaminated by feces can potentially spread the parasite. As a result, the parasite can be spread directly from person-to-person, through contact with contaminated objects (e.g., toys), or by swallowing contaminated food or water (drinking and recreational). Cryptosporidiosis outbreaks in child care settings are most common during late summer/early fall (August/September) but might occur at any time. The spread of cryptosporidiosis is highest among young children who are not toilet trained and their caregivers (those who change diapers).

Cryptosporidium is resistant to chlorine disinfection so it is tougher to kill than most disease-causing organisms. The usual disinfectants, including most commonly used bleach solutions, have little effect on the *Cryptosporidium* parasite. An application of either hydrogen peroxide or ammonia seems to work best. Hydrogen peroxide is probably the best choice in the child care setting, because ammonia has a strong odor and produces hazardous gas when mixed with bleach or other chlorinated solutions.

If an outbreak of cryptosporidiosis occurs in the child-care setting:

Educate staff and parents

- Inform all staff about the ongoing outbreak, the symptoms of cryptosporidiosis, how it is transmitted, and control measures to be followed.
- Inform parents about the ongoing outbreak, the symptoms of cryptosporidiosis, how it is transmitted, outbreak control policies, and needed changes in hygiene and cleanliness.
 - ◊ Notify parents of children who have been in direct contact with a child or an adult caregiver with diarrhea. Parents should contact the child's healthcare provider if their child develops diarrhea.
- Inform parents of children and staff about *Cryptosporidium's* potential to cause severe disease in immunocompromised persons. Immunocompromised persons should consult their healthcare provider for further guidance.

Exclude any child with diarrhea from the child care setting until the diarrhea has stopped.

- Children who are infected with *Cryptosporidium* but who do not have diarrhea may be allowed to return.
- Recently returning children can be grouped together in one classroom to minimize exposure to uninfected children.
- Move adults with diarrhea to jobs that minimize opportunities for spreading disease (administrative work instead of food preparation).

Terminate all water play or swimming activities (e.g., water tables, inflatable or rigid temporary swimming pools, public pool visits). This water can become contaminated and facilitate the spread of infections.

Practice good hygiene. **Note:** The measures outlined should be routine but are especially important during outbreaks.

- Enforce frequent hand washing and good hand washing technique for all children and adults.
 - * Note: *Cryptosporidium* is not killed by alcohol gels and hand sanitizers so these materials are of little use in controlling an outbreak.
 - * Use disposable towels.
 - * Good hand washing means:
 - Wet your hands with clean running water and apply soap.
 - Rub hands together to a lather and scrub all surfaces.
 - Continue rubbing hands for 20 seconds (imagine singing “Happy Birthday” twice).
 - Rinse hands well with water.
 - Dry hands with paper towels or an air dryer. If possible, use a paper towel to turn off the faucet.
 - * For children:
 - Observe hand washing or assist when needed. Wash children’s hands when they arrive at the child care facility, after they use the toilet, after having their diapers changed, and before eating snacks or meals.
 - * For adults:
 - Wash hands after using the toilet, after helping a child use the toilet, after diapering a child, and before preparing or serving food. (**Note:** Where staffing permits, people who change diapers should not prepare or serve food).
- Improve diaper changing practice.
 - * Separate diaper changing areas from children’s play and food preparation areas.
 - * Use disposable gloves and change them after each diaper change.
 - * Use disposable paper over the diaper changing surfaces and change it after each diaper change.
 - * Ensure children wear clothing over their diapers to reduce the opportunity for leakage.
 - * Wash hands: both yours and the child’s.

Disinfect surfaces and objects

- No disinfectant is guaranteed to be completely effective against *Cryptosporidium*. However, hydrogen peroxide is usually effective.
 - * Instead of a bleach solution, use a 3% (99% kill rate) or, if available, 6% (99.9% kill rate) concentration of hydrogen peroxide to soak contaminated surfaces for 20 minutes.
 - * Ammonia can also be used (5% solution for 18 hours) but it has a strong odor and, if accidentally mixed with bleach or other chlorine-containing solutions, produces hazardous chlorine gas.
- Disinfect bathrooms, diaper areas, and food preparation surfaces daily.
- Disinfect toys, tabletops, and high chairs more frequently than usual (at least twice daily).
 - * Dishwasher-safe toys can be disinfected in a commercial dishwasher that has a dry cycle or a final rinse that exceeds 113°F for 20 minutes or 122°F for 5 minutes or 162°F for 1 minute. Cloth toys may be washed and heat-dried on the highest clothes dryer heat setting for 30 minutes.
- These are not routine measures, but may be necessary if an outbreak occurs; usually 2 or more cases in the same child care group.

Notify the state or local health department about an excessive level of diarrhea or any *Cryptosporidium* infections in a daycare. *Cryptosporidium* is a reportable disease.





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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.

Oficina de Salud Y Servicios Humanos
2377 N. Stemmons Freeway

Zachary Thompson, Director

Dallas, Texas 75207

Dr. John Carlo, Director Médico

(214) 819-2004