



NAVY AND MARINE CORPS PUBLIC HEALTH CENTER

IMPROVING READINESS THROUGH PUBLIC HEALTH ACTION

Cryptosporidium in Recreational Waters

Cryptosporidiosis (Crypto), caused by the parasite *Cryptosporidium*, is one of the leading causes of recreational water illness in the United States. *Cryptosporidium* is resistant to chlorine disinfection and the small size enables it to pass through water filtration systems. The transmission of Crypto peaks in the summer and early fall, which coincides with the recreational water season.



Infection

Symptoms of Crypto generally begin within two to ten days of exposure. Swallowing contaminated water is how people are often infected. The most common symptom is watery diarrhea, which can last two to three weeks. Other symptoms include stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, fever and weight loss. It is a reportable medical event and should be reported in accordance with [BUMEDINST 6220.12 series](#).

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), half of all treated recreational water-associated outbreaks reported for 2011-2012 were caused by *Cryptosporidium*. Among treated recreational water-associated outbreaks of gastrointestinal illness that began in June-August, >90% were caused by *Cryptosporidium*.

Prevention

At recreational water facilities, early recognition and intervention is the best strategy. Crypto may be mitigated by both environmental and behavioral controls.

[Aquatics Operators and Managers should:](#)

- Establish, implement and enforce diarrhea exclusion policies for patrons and staff.
- Develop a fecal incident response plan and train staff on the response procedures. All diarrheal incidents are considered potentially high risk events for Crypto.

[Installation Medical Treatment Facility:](#)

- Establish good communication and a strong working relationship with the aquatics operators and managers to ensure appropriate and timely response to crypto outbreak concerns.

[Patrons of Recreational Water Venues should:](#)

- Avoid swallowing pool water at recreational water facilities.
- Protect others by not swimming if experiencing diarrhea (especially children in diapers).
- Wash children thoroughly with soap and water after diaper changing or toilet use.
- Take children on frequent bathroom breaks and check their diapers often. Diapers should be changed in the bathroom, not at the poolside.

For More Information, Resources and Tools for Recreational Waters, visit:

- [Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center Recreational Waters](#)