



Facts About Crypto and Swimming Pools

What is Crypto and how can it affect me?

“Crypto” (krip-TOE), short for *Cryptosporidium*, is a **germ that causes diarrhea**. This germ is found in the fecal matter of a person who has been infected by Crypto. It has a tough outer shell that allows it to survive for a long time in the environment. It can survive for days even in properly chlorinated pools.

Crypto is one of the most common causes of recreational water illness (disease caused by germs spread through pool water) in the United States and can cause prolonged diarrhea (for 1–2 weeks). It can make anyone sick, but certain groups of people are more likely to become seriously ill when infected with Crypto:

- > Young children
- > Pregnant women
- > Individuals with weakened immune systems

How is Crypto spread in pools?

Crypto is **spread by swallowing water** that has been contaminated with fecal matter containing Crypto.

You share the water—and the germs in it—with **every person** who enters the pool. This means that just one person with diarrhea can easily contaminate the water. Swallowing even a small amount of pool water that has been contaminated with the Crypto germ can make you sick.

Crypto can also be spread by swallowing contaminated water from water parks, interactive fountains, water play areas, hot tubs, lakes, rivers, springs, ponds, streams, and oceans.

How do I protect myself, my family, and other swimmers?

Take action! Because Crypto can stay alive for days even in well-maintained pools, stopping the germ from getting there in the first place is essential.

Three Steps for All Swimmers

- > Don't swim when you have diarrhea. You can spread germs in the water and make other people sick.
- > Don't swallow the pool water. Avoid getting water in your mouth.
- > Practice good hygiene. Shower with soap before swimming and wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers. Germs on your body end up in the water.

Three Steps for Parents of Young Kids

- > Take your kids on bathroom breaks or check diapers often. Waiting to hear “I have to go” may mean that it's too late.
- > Change diapers in a bathroom or a diaper-changing area and not at poolside. Germs can spread in and around the pool.
- > Wash your child thoroughly (especially the rear end) with soap and water before they go swimming. Invisible amounts of fecal matter can end up in the pool.

SWIMMERS AND PARENTS

For more information about Crypto, visit www.cdc.gov/crypto/

For more information on preventing illness and injury at the pool, visit www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/

POOL OPERATORS

For guidelines and resources on how to prevent Crypto and other germs from contaminating the water, visit www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/audience-aquatics-staff.html

