



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

May 23, 2024

CONTACT:

Michael.Claffey@illinois.gov

James.Leach@Illinois.gov

IDPH Reminds Illinoisans to Practice Safe Swimming Habits to Prevent Drownings and Other Water Risks

CHICAGO – As the Memorial Day weekend and outdoor swimming season are approaching, the Illinois Department of Public Health is marking [Healthy and Safe Swimming Week](#) by reminding the public to take precautions to avoid risks such as drowning, spreading disease, and pool chemical injuries. This year's theme is *Prevent Drowning: Swim Lessons Save Lives* and highlights the importance of basic swimming and water safety skills training in keeping children and adults safe around water.

“Swimming is a favorite summer pastime – one that provides fun and health benefits for Illinoisans of all ages,” said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra. “However, unsafe swimming can be dangerous, whether it is in a swimming pool or in natural bodies of water like rivers or lakes. Sadly, drownings are one of the leading causes of deaths in children, and even more so for those under 4. I encourage all Illinois residents – and especially those responsible for young children - to follow [safe swimming practices to prevent drowning](#). One of those critical practices is encouraging swimming lessons for children. I ask all parents of young children to seek opportunities in their communities to build this critical life-saving skill.”

A recent CDC study found that reviewed 20 years of data found that drowning was the number one killer nationally of children aged 1-4 years and the number two killer of children 0-17 [in unintentional injury deaths](#).

Following are some safe swimming tips:

- Make sure children have swimming lessons and are closely supervised at all times.
- Swimming pools should be fully enclosed by fencing and have a self-closing and self-latching gates.
- Life jackets reduce the risk of drowning while boating for people of all ages.

IDPH notes that diarrhea is the most common cause of recreational water illness (RWI), and therefore anyone with symptoms should avoid swimming. Just one diarrheal or vomiting accident in the water can release millions of germs. If other swimmers swallow a mouthful of the water, it can cause diarrhea lasting up to three weeks.

Find us on Facebook at [Facebook.com/IDPH.Illinois](https://www.facebook.com/IDPH.Illinois) or follow us on Twitter @IDPH

Nationally Accredited by PHAB



Crypto (short for Cryptosporidium) is a gastro-intestinal illness that causes diarrhea and is the leading cause of outbreaks linked to pools and water parks. Crypto can survive in a chlorinated pool for more than one week. Other germs that can cause illness include Giardia, norovirus, Shigella, Legionnaire's Disease, and E. coli. RWIs can also be caused by chemicals added to treat water. Other RWIs include skin, ear, respiratory, eye, neurologic, and wound infections.

Here are some tips swimmers should take to avoid swimming related diseases:

- Don't swim or let your kids swim if they have or have had diarrhea in the past two weeks. If there is an accident, let the pool operator know.
- Try not to get water in your mouth.
- Check out the latest pool inspection report and do your own mini-inspection.
- Take kids on bathroom breaks every 60 minutes.
- Check diapers every 30–60 minutes and change them in a bathroom or diaper-changing area—not waterside—to keep germs away from the water.
- Shower before you get in the water. Rinsing off in the shower for just one minute helps get rid of most stuff that might be on swimmer's body.

Another cause for concern is pool chemical safety. If you own or operate a swimming pool, you should know how to safely use pool chemicals and you should protect children and pets by storing them safely and out of the reach of children.

Swimming in lakes and other natural bodies of water comes with a unique set of risks such as amoeba and algae. To reduce the chance of illness, limit the amount of water up your nose by holding your nose or using nose clips when diving or water skiing. Avoid putting your head underwater and don't stir up mud and scum while swimming in warm freshwater areas. If you see that the beach is closed, stay out of it. Don't swim, water ski, or boat in areas where the water is discolored or where you see foam, scum, or mats of algae on the water's surface.

When it comes to boating, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Illinois Conservation Police are reminding the boaters [to practice safe boating](#) by wearing life jackets and only operating a boat while sober. Jet Skis and other personal watercraft also pose a risk to swimmers and their operators and should never be used while under the influence.

In order to protect the public, IDPH licenses and regulates swimming facilities in Illinois. The state's 3,200 swimming facilities are required to meet water quality and safety standards, including engineering design standards that apply to pools, spas, beaches, water supplies, bather preparation areas, and water treatment systems. To check the status of a swimming facility licensed by IDPH, use the [IDPH Swimming Facility Search](#).

You can also learn about the health status of Illinois beaches, including beach closures, advisories, and test results, by checking the online [Illinois Beach Guard System](#).