



WWA Response Plan

Cryptosporidium Incident Response

Summary

Cryptosporidium (“crypto”) is a diarrheal illness caused by a microscopic parasite that lives in the intestines of humans & animals. For a number of reasons reported crypto infections have increased significantly since 2005. This paper will cover the many proactive steps aquatic facilities can take to prevent the spread of crypto, and help you respond to the media in the event of a crypto outbreak.

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Cryptosporidium Facts

What is Cryptosporidium? Crypto is microscopic intestinal parasite that can cause illness in infected humans. The parasite is protected by an outer shell that allows it to survive outside the body for long periods of time and makes it very resistant to chlorine disinfection. It is one of the most frequent causes of waterborne disease among humans in the United States.

What are the symptoms? Profuse diarrhea, stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting and sometimes fever. Healthy people are usually sick about two weeks, although some infected people suffer no symptoms. Crypto can threaten the lives of infants and people with weak immune systems.

How does crypto spread? People get crypto by swallowing water with contaminated feces. They also get it when they put something in their mouths or accidentally swallow something from a contaminated surface like a lounge chair, picnic table, bathroom fixture or diaper changing table.

How long can someone with crypto spread it? Infected people can pass the parasites in their stools for two weeks after symptoms stop. Avoid swimming pools, hot tubs or other recreational water activities during this time.

How long does it take to get sick after you're infected? Two to 10 days. The average is seven.

What should a person do if they think they have crypto? See a doctor. Doctors order special lab tests to identify infections.

What is the treatment for crypto? Physicians may prescribe Nitazoxanide (brand name Alinia) for children over the age of 1 and adults with healthy immune systems. Most healthy people recover without treatment. Drinking plenty of fluids is recommended.

Why are reported cases of crypto on the rise?

- 1.) An increase in the number of spray pads and wading pools, along with scores of often unregulated swimming pools in apartment complexes and subdivisions.
- 2.) In 2004 the first drug for treating crypto was approved, increasing the likelihood that healthcare providers test for crypto in patients with diarrhea.
- 3.) Doctors are doing more reporting of crypto cases to health departments, who then investigate and search for the source of outbreaks.

Why are spray pads and wading pools especially susceptible? Young children are the most likely to introduce fecal matter in these types of pools, and also the most likely to ingest the water (often sitting on fountains, and then drinking from them).

Preventing Crypto Outbreaks in Aquatic Facilities

1.) Invest in equipment

- a. Install Ultraviolet Light (UV), especially on kiddie pools, hot tubs and spray pads
- b. Invest in and maintain equipment that ensures proper turnover, circulation and chemical disinfection.
- c. Monitor and calibrate automated systems regularly.

2.) Train your staff

- a. Follow the CDC's new recommendations (updated in 2007) for responding to fecal accidents in disinfected swimming venues. Download at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/pdf/fecal-incident-response-guidelines.pdf>

- b. Respond quickly to a report of feces in a pool, taking action to close the pool, remove the fecal matter, raise and maintain free chlorine to levels depending on whether it was a formed-stool or diarrheal accident.
- c. Train staff to super-chlorinate safely.
- d. Properly disinfect pool decks and restrooms.
- e. Enforce rules regarding swim diapers and allow diaper changing at changing stations only, not poolside.
- f. Reassign duties for employees with diarrhea, especially food preparers and those in contact with the water.
- g. Offer guests ill with diarrhea a pass to return on another day.
- h. Have a local qualified lab ready to test water samples for coliforms and crypto before super-chlorination and quickly report back to you.
- i. Maintain close communication with your local health department so if there is an outbreak at a neighboring facility you can react proactively to prevent the spread.

3.) Educate your guests

- a. Install large, easy-to-read signs, especially near kiddie play areas, with:
 - i. Don't swim if you or your kids have had diarrhea in the previous 2 weeks.
 - ii. Babies, toddlers and incontinent adults must wear swim diapers.
 - iii. Don't let kids swallow pool water.
 - iv. Shower before swimming & wash your hands after toilet use or diaper changing.
 - v. Take kids on frequent potty breaks and check diapers often.
 - vi. Change diapers in restroom, not poolside.

Sample Press or Media Release for Crypto Prevention

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Month] [Date], [Year] [Time]

CONTACT: [Facility media contact's name]

[Facility media contact's phone numbers]

[Facility media contact's email]

Cryptosporidium Prevention: A Shared Responsibility

[CITY, STATE]— Take a shower. Put infants and incontinent adults in swim diapers. And don't swim if you've had diarrhea within the past two weeks. These are some of the rules that swimmers need to follow this summer to help prevent the waterborne illness cryptosporidium. Crypto is an intestinal parasite that causes diarrhea and which can be contracted from swallowing contaminated pool water.

While (our aquatic facility) has taken proactive measures keep our pools clean and safe, we also rely on the swimming public to do their part. This summer (our aquatic facility) (for example) has:

- Added Ultraviolet Light to our Kiddie Pool to kill chlorine-resistant crypto
- Trained our staff in new procedures for cleaning up fecal accidents
- Added signs to the park to educate our guests about how they can help prevent crypto

We're asking for the media's help in preventing an outbreak of cryptosporidium this summer by getting these rules out to swimmers:

- Don't swim if you or your kids have had diarrhea in the previous 2 weeks.
- Babies, toddlers and incontinent adults must wear swim diapers.
- Don't swallow pool water.
- Shower before swimming & wash your hands after toilet use or diaper changing.
- Take kids on frequent potty breaks and check diapers often.
- Change diapers in the restroom, not poolside.

By working together, aquatic facilities and swimmers can ensure a healthy and safe summer swim season.

Sample Initial Statement on a Cryptosporidium Incident

Note: Unless the news media is aware of a crypto incident at your pool, you probably don't want to draw attention to it by releasing a statement. Once it becomes clear that the news is out, you must take a pro-active role in managing your message, controlling the damage, and educating the public. Remember that "No comment" is never an acceptable response.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Month] [Date], [Year] [Time]

CONTACT: [Facility media contact's name]

[Facility media contact's phone numbers]

[Facility media contact's email]

STATEMENT FROM [FACILITY NAME]

[CITY, STATE]— Despite (our facility's) best efforts at prevention, a few cases of cryptosporidium ("crypto") have been reported by swimmers who attended our facility. Crypto can cause diarrhea, although many infected people have no symptoms. Keep in mind that of the approximately (100,000) guests who have swam at (our facility) so far this summer, only (3) cases have been reported. The local Health Department has confirmed that our water is now clean and free of cryptosporidium.

(Our facility) has increased its ongoing prevention efforts by:

- Super-chlorinating the water throughout facility
- Re-calibrating all automated water chemistry and testing equipment
- Testing water at a qualified lab to confirm it's free of crypto
- Disinfecting all restrooms and pool decks

The swimming public can help by:

- Don't swim if you or your kids have had diarrhea in the previous 2 weeks.
- Babies, toddlers and incontinent adults must wear swim diapers.
- Don't swallow pool water.
- Shower before swimming & wash your hands after toilet use or diaper changing.
- Take kids on frequent potty breaks and check diapers often.
- Change diapers in restroom, not poolside.

By working together, aquatic facilities and swimmers can ensure a healthy and safe summer swim season.

Sample Media Questions Following a Crypto Incident

- Who got sick at your pool? [Note: Release only if appropriate to do so, and as generically as possible, “two guests,” for example.]
- What was the guest’s age?
- Was the guest hospitalized?
- Will the aquatic facility cover the expenses [We have contacted our insurance company]
- Is your water clean and safe now [talk about preventative measures you’ve taken, clean lab tests]
- Do you expect more people to get sick [we certainly hope not and we’re working to make sure that doesn’t happen. Here’s how the swimming public can help...]
- What would you like to say to the families [we wish them a fast and complete recovery]

General Guidelines in Handling the Media

- Do everything you can to make the media's job easier: Give them a comfortable place to set up, bring them drinks, etc. They have a job to do, and chances are the more you help them do their job, the better you will be treated.
- Never say "no comment." If you have a legitimate reason for not answering a question (for example: you don't know the answer, family has not been notified, etc.), then simply say so.
- Remember that nothing is "off the record." If you don't want it reported, don't say it.
- Remember: The truth will come out. It is best for the park to be the one sharing it, rather than let the media uncover it later.
- Reporters are always on deadline, so the more promptly you can provide them with information, the better. Otherwise, the park's perspective may not be included in reporters' stories.
- Be careful of "hearsay" questions: "Other visitors to your park were saying that your lifeguards were not watching their water. What do you say to that?" Remember, you should deal only in known facts. A sample response: "I don't know anything about that in particular, but we will be investigating all possible contributing factors in this incident."
- Don't invoke swimmer misconduct unless and until you are absolutely certain of its role in the incident. You do not want to be seen as blaming the victim. Only share this type of information if the investigation supports it; before that, do not speculate.