



CDC Partners with NSPF® to Create Crypto Outbreak Alert System

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Swimming Pool Foundation® (NSPF®) have established a Cryptosporidium (Crypto) Outbreak Alert System to help aquatic facilities protect their patrons from recreational water illness. During the past two decades, Crypto has become recognized as one of the most common causes of waterborne disease (recreational water and drinking water) in the United States. The CDC and NSPF encourage other organizations to disseminate the Outbreak Alert to their contacts too. Readers should visit www.nspf.org/Cryptotoolkit.html and sign up to make sure they receive Alerts. They can also download and review the Toolkit of available materials, to prepare to prevent or limit outbreaks.

The system is relatively simple. It focuses on building awareness of the risk and revealing prevention strategies. When CDC becomes aware of a large cryptosporidiosis outbreak with the potential for having a regional impact, CDC will contact NSPF who will broadcast a regional email. Each Alert will include the general location of the outbreak and a link to the Crypto Toolkit. Toolkits are posted both at the CDC and NSPF websites.

Though containment is critical, prevention is paramount; the Alerts focus on both. Each Alert will include the general location of the outbreak and a link to the Toolkit. The Toolkit includes posters and brochures that facilities can print for free to educate consumers about not swimming when they have diarrhea. In addition, there are documents to educate facility personnel about Crypto and how to treat water that may be contaminated.

According to the CDC, in 2007, there were at least 18 documented Cryptosporidiosis outbreaks related to treated aquatics venues, the largest one in Utah affecting more than 1,900 people. Other large outbreaks, including the New York outbreak in 2005, demonstrate that Crypto outbreaks will quickly spread to impact many states, facilities, and thousands of people.

It is important that more rigorous prevention strategies be implemented with Crypto because it is resistant to chlorine and survives for days without special treatments. Even well maintained, treated aquatic venues (pools, water parks, interactive spray grounds) can spread Crypto. Therefore, it is very important for pool operators, public health officials, and the public to work together to keep Crypto out of the water. The Toolkit includes twelve steps that facility management can implement to prevent outbreaks.

Previous outbreak investigations have shown that when a pool is contaminated and the pool is closed, patrons will go to other facilities and unknowingly contaminate them too. The result is the outbreak spreads when pools are closed and consumers are not educated. Crypto is spread from diarrhea of ill people. Thus, it is important to educate patrons and employees to stay out of the water if they have diarrhea.

Facilities should consider other measures to reduce outbreak risks at their facility. Studies have shown using supplemental disinfection, such as in-line ultraviolet radiation and ozone, can reduce the transmission of Crypto. Keep in mind that due to dilution, not all water passes through the system. Additional strategies to reduce risk include periodic hyperchlorination and improving water circulation throughout the pool, increasing turn over rates, and/or using flocculants or water clarifiers. Chlorine dioxide is also effective at inactivating Crypto. It can be used in some countries, but is not registered for this particular use in the U.S. at this time.

To sign up to receive Outbreak Alert Notifications or read more information on the Alert system and the Toolkit contents, visit www.nspf.org/cryptotoolkit.html.

For more information about healthy swimming visit your state's website (<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming/state.htm>) or CDC's Healthy Swimming website (www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming).