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Keep on Swimming!

Editor's Note: NEHA strives to provide up-to-date and relevant information on environmental health and to build partnerships in the profession. In pursuit of these goals, we feature a column from the Environmental Health Services Branch (EHSB) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in every issue of the *Journal*.

In this column, EHSB and guest authors from across CDC will highlight a variety of concerns, opportunities, challenges, and successes that we all share in environmental public health. EHSB's objective is to strengthen the role of state, local, and national environmental health programs and professionals to anticipate, identify, and respond to adverse environmental exposures and the consequences of these exposures for human health. The services being developed through EHSB include access to topical, relevant, and scientific information; consultation; and assistance to environmental health specialists, sanitarians, and environmental health professionals and practitioners.

The conclusions in this article are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CAPT Charles Otto is the innovation team leader in CDC's Environmental Health Services Branch. Michele Hlavsa is chief of CDC's Healthy Swimming Program in CDC's Domestic Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Team.

This month's column updates the medley of healthy swimming initiatives by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Let's dive right into

- Recreational Water Illness (RWI) Prevention Week 2010,
- the New Pool Inspection Data Study and
- the Model Aquatic Health Code (MAHC).

RWI Prevention Week 2010

RWI Prevention Week will be celebrated May 24–30, 2010, in many jurisdictions across the

United States and at CDC. This week highlights the public's significant role in practicing healthy swimming behaviors and showcases one of the many important environmental health (EH) programs in our partner state and local agencies. Support materials, including a publicity tool kit, are available on the Healthy Swimming Web site at www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/index.html.

New for RWI Prevention Week 2009 were two short CDC videos: "In the Swim of Things" and "Healthy Swimming Is No Acci-

dent." These videos can be used by our public health partners and broadcast to promote healthy swimming. Additionally, more than 250,000 copies of new English and Spanish healthy swimming brochures (Figure 1) and pool chemical safety posters (Figure 2) were distributed. Order yours free today on the Healthy Swimming Web site.

Has RWI Prevention Week made a difference? The annual event has brought national, regional, and local media attention to healthy swimming behaviors and to the important EH programs that protect the health of our communities. Each year related publicity has grown substantially in the number of printed and electronic media pieces and its geographic spread across the country. RWI Prevention Week 2009 saw the largest number of participating jurisdictions to date, and it even broke into the realm of blogs. Participating partners can showcase their important state and local EH roles in RWI prevention through their local media.

Successful efforts that prevent RWIs are at least in part based on the following:

- communication (e.g., within and among health departments and with community partners such as pool operators),
- education of the swimming public, and
- regulation.

The experience of colleagues in three jurisdictions underscores this. In 2007, state and local EH specialists and epidemiologists in Idaho, Pennsylvania, and Utah collaborated to investigate and control large RWI outbreaks of cryptosporidiosis in their respective jurisdictions. To prevent such outbreaks in 2008, each jurisdiction developed and implemented proactive

measures (e.g., www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/default.aspx?TabId=113, www.health.montcopa.org, and www.nocrypto.org) before the start of the 2008 traditional summer swim season, with the biggest push occurring during RWI Prevention Week. As a result, relatively few sporadic cryptosporidiosis cases were identified in each of the jurisdictions in 2008. Communication and education are core to RWI Prevention Week programming and have contributed to improving aquatic health in these communities.

Aquatic Health Inspection Report Study

The *Morbidity Mortality Weekly Report* to be issued during RWI Prevention Week 2010 will include a report on the new Pool Inspection Data Study, the second leg of our healthy swimming medley. This study is a repeat of the popular and informative—but limited—2002 study of 22,000 pool inspections from six state and local jurisdictions (CDC, 2003).

The new study represents a collaborative effort with 19 EH programs (12 local and seven state) that contributed approximately 150,000 pool inspection reports from 2008 for analysis. The 2010 NEHA Annual Educational Conference & Exhibition (June 6–9 in Albuquerque, New Mexico) Aquatic Health Educational Track will include Elizabeth Dunbar’s (study coordinator) presentation on the study’s findings and how they can be utilized in evidence-based EH program decision making.

Model Aquatic Health Code

The MAHC is the third and the final leg in this healthy swimming medley. Appropriate, effective regulation can help prevent RWIs. The MAHC was described in this column in May 2009 (Beach, 2009). Over the past year, a dozen technical committees with over 150 volunteers have spent thousands of hours gathering scientific and technical evidence on how to make aquatics healthier.

Now is the time for you to join the MAHC’s aquatic health team if you have not been involved. Draft MAHC modules are being posted on the CDC Healthy Swimming Web site for public comment. Your comments on each part of the MAHC draft will make a better product available to all EH aquatic health programs. Review the draft modules and find

FIGURE 1
Healthy Swimming Brochure

Think Healthy. Be Healthy. Swim Healthy!

Remember, you share the pool water with everyone.

If someone with diarrhea contaminates the water, swallowing that water can make you sick.

Pool water is not drinking water.

So, you think chlorine kills germs. Yes, it does. But it doesn't work right away. It takes time to kill germs.

Without your help, even the best-maintained pools can spread germs.

Three Steps for Water Safety

PLEASE keep an eye on your child at all times. Remember, kids can drown in seconds and in silence.

PLEASE use appropriately fitted life jackets* instead of air-filled or foam toys (such as "water-wings" or "noodles"). These toys are not designed to keep children safe.

*www.uscgboating.org/waterpoints/archives/may07/art1_care.htm

PLEASE use sunscreen with at least SPF 15 and both UVA and UVB protection, and be sure to reapply it after swimming. Just a few serious sunburns can increase the risk of getting skin cancer.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT
www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Healthy Swimming

Protect Yourself and Your Family Against Recreational Water Illnesses

Practice These Six Steps to Protect Yourself and Others

Without Your Help, Even the Best-Maintained Pools Can Spread Germs

All Swimmers

Many people have become sick from germs found in contaminated recreational water.

What are Recreational Water Illnesses?
Recreational Water Illnesses (RWIs) are the various illnesses caused by germs that can contaminate water in pools, lakes, and the ocean. The most common RWI is diarrheal illness caused by germs like "Crypto" and *E. coli* O157:H7.

How is diarrheal illness spread?
You share the pool water with everyone. A person with diarrhea can easily contaminate the pool with fecal matter. Germs that cause diarrheal illness can be spread when swimmers swallow contaminated water.

Pool water is not drinking water.

Does chlorine protect against RWIs?
Yes, RWI germs are killed by chlorine, but it doesn't work right away. Some germs like "Crypto" can live in pools for days. Without your help, even the best-maintained pools can spread germs.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT
www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming

Parents

Keep germs from causing recreational water illnesses (RWIs)

PLEASE don't swim when you have diarrhea. You can spread germs in the water and make other people sick.

PLEASE don't swallow pool water. Avoid getting water in your mouth.

PLEASE 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.

Keep germs out of the pool

PLEASE take your kids on bathroom breaks or check diapers often. Waiting to hear "I have to go" may mean that it's too late.

PLEASE change diapers in a bathroom or a diaper-changing area and not at poolside. Germs can be spread in and around the pool.

PLEASE wash your children thoroughly (especially the rear end) with soap and water before they go swimming. Invisible amounts of fecal matter can end up in the pool.

out more about MAHC on the Healthy Swimming Web site.

As in real swimming events, many challenges exist for local, state, and national

aquatic health programs. Budgets, program reorganization and elimination, and other health priorities tested us in 2009, yet together we were able to build on the progress

FIGURE 2

Pool Chemical Safety Poster



and successes of previous years. As we start the 2010 traditional summer swim season, we hope you can share in our pride and celebration of winning our healthy swimming medley—RWI Prevention Week 2010, the Pool Inspection Study, and the MAHC. Keep on swimming those final few strokes; the roar we hear is the country's applause as we near the finish line! 🏊

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References

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Thanks!

did you know

CDC estimates that Americans suffer 76 million cases of foodborne illness each year.