

Health Bulletin



Beware Of Waterborne “Bugs” While Outdoors

(NAPSA)—Mosquitoes and bees aren't the only kinds of “bugs” that can cause problems when you're enjoying outdoor activities like swimming, hiking or camping. Waterborne protozoa like *Cryptosporidium* and *Giardia* are becoming increasingly common in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). While an insect bite might only annoy you for a day or two, these waterborne bugs cause a severe form of diarrhea that can last for weeks.

Cryptosporidium and *Giardia*, the two most common waterborne protozoa in the United States, are frequent causes of persistent diarrhea among both children and adults. The tiny bugs easily infiltrate pools, rivers and streams because small children wearing diapers—even animals carrying the protozoa—can contaminate the water system.

A recent CDC study reported that outbreaks of waterborne illnesses roughly doubled in the U.S. within a three-year span, and they estimate 100,000 to 2.5 million cases of giardiasis per year. And children have a greater risk of illness because of their level of immunity and risk factors for exposure.

“I call it the ‘hidden epidemic’ because so many children suffer from these infections, yet so few parents have ever heard of them,” said Dr. Bryan Vartabedian, a pediatric gastroenterologist who is on staff at Texas Children's Hospital. “We must see 10 cases per month in our practice.”

Cryptosporidium and *Giardia* infections can even be difficult for a doctor to diagnose. Warning signs include any combination of



When swimming in pools or rivers, it's important to take precautions to prevent waterborne illness.

these symptoms (usually occurring one to two weeks after exposure): persistent diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, fever, weight loss, abdominal pain, gas, bloating.

Here are some quick tips for avoiding infection from these organisms:

- While swimming, even in a chlorinated pool, avoid swallowing the water. *Cryptosporidium* and *Giardia* are resistant to chlorine;
- Be wary of pools where there are small children in diapers;
- Don't swim, or let your child swim, while suffering from diarrhea; and
- When hiking or camping, don't drink from rivers or streams.

In the past, doctors have had no drug to treat *Cryptosporidium* and very few for *Giardia*. Recently, however, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved a new drug for treating these infections in children. If you've been enjoying outdoor activities and experience these symptoms, consult your doctor.

For more information on these waterborne bugs, call 877-925-4642 or visit www.alinia.com.