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September 7, 2012

PRESS RELEASE – For Immediate Release

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Magic Valley Crypto Numbers Rise, SCPHD Issues Warning

TWIN FALLS-Within the last ten days, the South Central Public Health District (SCPHD) has seen an increase in cases of cryptosporidiosis (crypto). Crypto is a parasite that can cause diarrhea, abdominal pain, vomiting, and fever. It can spread through swimming pools and other recreational water. Crypto cases have been reported in Gooding, Lincoln, and Twin Falls counties, but the disease appears to be widespread in the Magic Valley. As a result, SCPHD is urging the public to take precautions to prevent the spread of the disease.

“Even with the end of summer approaching, people are still using area pools, lakes, and rivers,” said Mary Jensen, SCPHD Epidemiology Manager. “If you’ve been ill with diarrhea, we can’t emphasize enough how important it is to stay out of recreational waters for at least two weeks after your symptoms resolve.”

Cryptosporidiosis, commonly known as ‘crypto,’ is usually spread by accidentally swallowing water that has been contaminated with human stool or animal waste. The most frequent symptom is watery diarrhea with abdominal cramping which can be accompanied by dehydration, weight loss, abdominal pain, fever, nausea, and vomiting. If people have been in recreational waters and are experiencing persistent watery diarrhea, they are urged to consult their healthcare provider.

Once a person is infected, the parasites live in the intestines and are passed in the stool. In most instances, infected persons recover without medication. However, a healthcare provider may choose to use medication in cases that do not improve or when other medical issues exist.

Infected persons can continue to spread the disease up to two weeks after diarrhea subsides, so they should avoid activities involving recreational waters.

Because crypto can survive for days even in properly chlorinated pools, SCPHD is urging everyone to follow these seven steps to help reduce the spread of recreational water illnesses:

1. PLEASE don't swim when you have diarrhea. This is especially important for kids in diapers. If you have been diagnosed with crypto, please stay out of swimming pools and recreational waters for at least two weeks after symptoms are gone.
2. PLEASE don't swallow the pool water. In fact, avoid getting water in your mouth.
3. PLEASE practice good hygiene. Take a shower before swimming and wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers. Germs on your body end up in the water.
4. PLEASE take your kids on regular bathroom breaks or change diapers often (use swim diapers). Waiting to hear "I have to go" may mean that it's too late.
5. PLEASE change diapers in a bathroom, not at the poolside. Germs can spread to surfaces around the pool and spread illness.
6. PLEASE wash your child thoroughly (especially the rear end) with soap and water before swimming. Everyone has invisible amounts of fecal matter on their bottoms that end up in the pool.
7. PLEASE don't drink untreated water from streams, lakes, ponds, etc.

SCPHD has sent a Health Alert Network message to health care providers urging physicians to be aware of, test for, and report cases of cryptosporidiosis to the health district.

For additional information about cryptosporidiosis, please visit the SCPHD website at: www.phd5.idaho.gov.

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