



**COUNTY OF RIVESIDE
COMMUNITY HEALTH AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

HEALTH OFFICIALS ADVISE PUBLIC ON RARE WATER-BORNE ILLNESS

Following a recent death, Riverside County health officials are advising residents to consider precautions that might reduce the risk of exposure to a parasite typically acquired while swimming.

Naegleria fowleri, an amoeba commonly found in warm freshwater lakes and soil, causes a rare but severe brain infection that usually is fatal. Infections from the parasite are more common during hot summer months but cannot spread from person to person.

A Lake Elsinore child died Saturday from a brain infection caused by the parasite. Health officials know the child swam in Lake Elsinore several times this summer but it is not possible to determine where the child acquired the organism. It was Riverside County's first confirmed case due to the parasite, which enters the body through the nose while people swim.

"The risk of infection is extremely low and is no different in Lake Elsinore than in any other warm-water lake," said Eric Frykman, Riverside County's public health officer.

Thirty-three cases were reported in the United States from 1998 through 2007. Symptoms include headache, fever, nausea, vomiting and stiff neck. Individuals with those symptoms should contact their medical provider.

Precautions that might reduce to the risk of infection include:

- Avoid water-related activities in bodies of warm fresh water, hot springs and thermally polluted water such as water around power plants.
- Avoid water-related activities in fresh water when water temperatures are high and water levels are low.
- Hold the nose shut or use nose clips while taking part in water-related activities in bodies of warm fresh water such as lakes, rivers or hot springs.
- Avoid digging into or stirring up sediment while taking part in water-related activities in shallow, warm freshwater areas.

For further information on protecting yourself from recreational water illnesses, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming>.

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