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**PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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*Recreational Water Illness Prevention Week (May 21-27)*  
**Healthy swimming can help you stay well**

There are some 50 miles of beaches and more than 2,500 commercial pools and spas in Pinellas County. Each year, residents and visitors alike make countless visits to recreational water venues such as swimming pools, water parks, spas, lakes and beaches. Swimming is the second most popular physical activity in the country (walking is first) and the most popular among children. Unfortunately, recreational water use can also be associated with drowning, injury and the spread of infectious diseases.

The week leading up to Memorial Day (the “official start” of swimming season) is Recreational Water Illness Prevention Week – a time to highlight the importance of healthy swimming behaviors and preventing recreational water illness.

Recreational water illnesses (RWIs) spread by swallowing, breathing or having contact with contaminated water from swimming venues. Water may become contaminated because of poorly-maintained water parks, spas and pools; germs that are resistant to chlorine; or contamination of recreational waters due to run-off.

Diarrhea is the most commonly reported RWI. It’s caused by germs such as Giardia, Cryptosporidium, Shigella and Ecoli O157: H7. Other RWIs can cause a variety of symptoms, including skin, ear, eye, respiratory and neurological infections.

You can adopt healthy swimming behaviors that will protect you, your family and fellow swimmers from the spread of recreational water illness.

Tips for healthy swimming:

- Don’t swim when you have diarrhea. You can spread germs in the water and make others sick.
- Don’t swallow pool water. In fact, avoid getting any water you swim in, in your mouth.
- Wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers. Germs on your body can end up in the water.
- Take children on bathroom breaks and change their diapers often. Hearing “I have to go!” may mean it’s too late.
- Change diapers in a bathroom – not at poolside. Germs can spread in and around the pool area and water.

The Pinellas County Health Department monitors area waters and commercial pools for safe and healthy swimming conditions. Our Healthy Beaches program monitors 14 beaches in Pinellas County. To see sampling results from area beaches, visit [www.doh.state.fl.us](http://www.doh.state.fl.us). Select “Beach Water Quality” from the drop-down menu and then choose Pinellas County. You’ll see an explanation of sampling results, along with information on any advisories/warnings issued that may prohibit swimming at certain beach locations.

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[www.PinellasHealth.com](http://www.PinellasHealth.com)