



NKYHEALTH
NORTHERN KENTUCKY HEALTH DEPARTMENT



Public Health Advisory: Cryptosporidium Outbreak

August 16, 2024

The Northern Kentucky Health Department (NKY Health) has identified an outbreak of Cryptosporidiosis, better known as Crypto, within the Northern Kentucky area this week. Investigations are ongoing, with approximately a dozen confirmed cases and numerous probable cases. Several of the current cases had an association with a local public pool facility. It is important to note that even pools operating within required standards can still be at risk of Crypto exposure from an infected individual, since the parasite is resistant to the normal level of chlorination. As part of the outbreak response efforts, NKY Health is performing epidemiological investigations, providing related guidance to facilities and individuals, and taking associated actions to reduce risks.

Crypto is a gastrointestinal illness caused by the Cryptosporidium parasite and causing symptoms such as watery diarrhea, abdominal cramps, low-grade fever, vomiting, and nausea. These conditions can lead to dehydration and similar concerns. However, an individual's symptoms can vary and some may not show any symptoms. Young children and people immunologically suppressed are at increased risk for more severe illness. The incubation period for Crypto is from 2 to 10 days, with most developing symptoms in 7 days from time of exposure. In otherwise healthy individuals, symptoms usually subside within a couple of weeks with supportive care to treat the symptoms and avoid dehydration. Crypto can be shed (transmitted) for two weeks or more after symptoms subside.

Crypto parasites can infect humans and animals, which then shed the parasite in their feces (poop). Individuals directly exposed to water, food, soil, or surfaces that are contaminated with feces and then swallow the microscopic oocysts of the parasite can become infected. This is known as fecal-oral transmission. Inadequate handwashing is a common means of spreading Crypto. Crypto oocytes are extremely hardy, resistant to disinfectants, and tougher to kill than most disease-causing organisms in the environment. Common levels of chlorine disinfection measures have limited effect on the parasite, and alcohol hand sanitizers are ineffective. However, persistent cleaning and disinfection of surfaces can help reduce exposure, particularly in bathrooms and other high-risk areas.

Individuals with confirmed Crypto, loose stool or watery diarrhea, or who have had such conditions should not use swimming pools or other public bathing facilities for at least two (2) weeks after symptoms have stopped, as they can still shed the parasite and infect others. Diaper changing should take place in bathrooms or otherwise designated locations and not on pool decks, chairs, or tables. It is recommended that children not potty trained, or who are in diapers/swimmies, should not be in public swimming pools as this increases the risk of transmitting the illness if infected. Handwashing with soap and water should be done after using the restroom, changing diapers, before handling food items or eating, and after touching animals.

Additional information can be found at www.cdc.gov/cryptosporidium/about/index.html. Please see your medical provider if you have symptoms or believe you need testing for Crypto.

Northern Kentucky Health Department

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