Safe and Healthy Swimming:  
*Don’t let recreational water illness spoil Memorial Day Weekend*

**HAYDEN, ID** -- As North Idaho residents head to local swimming pools, water parks and lakes this Memorial Day weekend, Panhandle Health District is encouraging healthy swimming behaviors to prevent recreational water illnesses.

Recreational water illnesses (RWIs) are caused by germs spread through swimming in contaminated waters. When swimmers swallow or have contact with contaminated water, they are at risk of contracting a variety of infections from germs including Cryptosporidium, Giardia, E.coli, Campylobacter and Vibrio. These germs can cause severe gastrointestinal, skin, ear, respiratory, eye, neurologic, and wound infections.

“These germs can contaminate water as they wash off swimmers’ bodies,” Staff Epidemiologist, Dave Hylsky explained. “If someone you’re swimming with was recently sick with vomiting, diarrhea, or a skin infection, swallowing any amount of that water could make you very ill.”

Cryptosporidiosis (commonly known as ‘Crypto’) cases within Panhandle Health District have been steadily increasing since 2012. In 2016, 42 North Idaho residents reported illnesses likely related to recreational water.

**The best way to prevent RWIs is to keep germs out of the water by following these steps:**

- Don’t swim when you have (or recently had) diarrhea or other gastrointestinal symptoms.
- Avoid swallowing water directly from pools, rivers, lakes or other bodies of water.
- Before getting in the water, wash your body in the shower, clean any open wounds or cuts and make sure they are completely covered with a bandage.
- Make sure children who are not yet potty-trained are wearing diapers made specifically for swimming.
- Take children on frequent bathroom breaks.
- After getting out of the water, thoroughly wash your hands with clean water or use hand sanitizer before eating or snacking.
- Towel off as soon as possible after getting out of the water.
- If you own a pool, check the chlorine levels before getting into the water.
Panhandle Health District routinely visits public pools and water parks to ensure local facilities meet water quality and safety standards. If you become ill after swimming, visit your primary healthcare provider. For more information about recreational water illnesses, visit the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s Healthy Swimming website.

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