



NIAGARA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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For Immediate Release:

PRESS RELEASE – Healthy Swimming
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With the summer season fast approaching the Niagara County Department of Health is urging people who visit pools, water parks or other water recreation facilities to adhere to healthy swimming practices to protect themselves and others.

The Niagara County Department of Health has been conducting weekly sampling at the Krull Park Bathing Beach, the Hartland Cove, Lazy Lakes and Niagara County Camping Resort and also at various locations along Lake Ontario. Early season water quality at the campground beaches has been good. Several bacteriological water quality samples at Krull Park have exceeded water quality standards. It is noted that the beach is not expected to open for several weeks. As a result of our current and previous sampling at the beach, the Niagara County Department of Health will be instituting a pre-emptive beach closure procedure for the upcoming swimming season. As rainfall/runoff appear to be contributing to the high bacteria counts, the beach will be closed if the preceding days rainfall exceeds 0.5 inches. The beach will not be re-opened until a sample indicates satisfactory, bacteriological water quality. Swimming and other water activities provide an escape from the summer heat and are a great way to be physically active while having fun. To ensure a safe and healthy swimming experience, families should check water conditions, take safety precautions to prevent exposure to germs, and always ensure that swimmers, especially children under 5, have proper supervision.

All swimmers are encouraged to follow the Triple A's of Healthy Swimming:

- **Awareness: Be aware** of conditions that could pose a threat, including contaminants such as blood, vomit, or fecal matter in pools or spray grounds. The most common germs spread through recreational water may cause diarrhea or skin rashes. These germs are transmitted when a person swallows water contaminated with fecal matter or skin is exposed to contaminated water. If the water is not clean and clear, or if you become aware of any potential contaminants, alert the pool operator immediately.
- **Action: Be active** in checking water conditions by asking pool operators about chlorine and pH levels and asking to see the latest pool inspection report. Proper chlorine levels will kill germs caused by blood, but additional action, including temporary pool closures, may be required for fecal matter and vomit. (CDC recommends the following water quality levels to kill germs: free chlorine levels at 1–3 parts per million (ppm) pH 7.2–7.8). A recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) study on routine pool inspections in 15 counties and states, including New York, found that 10.7 percent of pools had violations related to disinfectant levels and 8.9 percent had pH level violations.
- **Advocacy: Be a strong advocate** for swimming water safety by discussing safety steps to kill germs with pool operators. Also, share information about healthy swimming behaviors with friends and other swimmers.

Good hygiene and common sense are essential to healthy swimming. Don't swim if you are ill or have diarrhea, and avoid swallowing pool water. People are also advised to shower with soap prior to swimming and wash their hands after using the toilet or changing diapers to prevent germs on their bodies from getting into the water.



Parents should also take their children on frequent bathroom breaks and check diapers often. If a diaper needs to be changed, use a bathroom or designated diaper changing area and thoroughly clean the child. Never change a diaper at poolside or beachfront.

A safe swimming experience also involves precautions to prevent drowning. In 2008, 102 New Yorkers drowned, including six at regulated public swimming pools and bathing beaches (i.e., pools other than private backyard pools). The highest drowning rates were for teens and children under age 5. Preliminary figures for 2009 indicate that two people drowned at regulated facilities.

People should never swim alone or consume alcohol or use drugs when swimming or boating. In general, 40 percent of drowning victims were alone in the water at the time of the incident, and half of all drowning of people over age 14 were associated with alcohol or drug use.

Individuals with medical conditions such as seizure disorders, heart disease or diabetes that can cause unconsciousness or disability should take extra precautions.

Backyard pools should be inaccessible to children unless an adult is present to provide direct supervision. Fencing that is required around pools must meet the State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code and should feature self-closing, self-latching gates to prevent access.

This year the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) launched a national campaign to promote pool safety. According to CPSC data, an average of 385 children under age 15 drown in pools or spas each year, including 299 children under the age of 5 (78 percent). In addition, nearly 74 percent of fatal drowning involving children under 15 years of age occurred at a residence

People swimming in natural water bodies should be aware of swift currents and potential drop-offs that can be hazardous even to highly advanced swimmers. The Niagara County Department of Health encourages people to swim at regulated beaches where there are requirements for bather supervision and water quality.

When boating, all passengers should wear personal floatation devices such as life vests at all times. Before heading out on a boat check weather and water conditions, especially if visiting unfamiliar areas.

Look for signs of someone who is drowning. Many people think that someone is not in trouble unless that person is calling for help. But if a person is drowning, he or she is trying to breathe, not speak. It may appear that the person is splashing or waving. Typically, a person who is in trouble thrashes in the water with arms extended, attempting to keep his or her head above water. This happens very fast -- in as few as 20 seconds or as long as a minute. Any delay can be fatal.

For additional information on swimming safety and statistics on drowning deaths in New York, visit: <http://www.nyhealth.gov/environmental/outdoors/swimming>. Additional information on Recreational Water Illness Prevention can be found at: http://www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming/rwi_prevention_week.htm.