



## Water Safety

As the weather gets warmer, families look forward to outdoor recreation, which includes swimming in pools, inland lakes, and Lake Michigan. While swimming is a fun activity for all ages (and good exercise!), it is important to know about water safety before getting wet. BCHD staff inspects beaches and samples bathing water each week from Memorial Day to Labor Day at 13 public locations.

Thousands of people in the United States die each year from drowning. In fact, it is one of the leading causes of accidental death for children under five. These tragedies can be prevented by using safe practices around the water.

### General water safety tips:

- Set depth restrictions for all family members based on swimming abilities. Inexperi-



enced swimmers should stay in shallower water.

- Never dive headfirst unless an area is clearly marked as safe

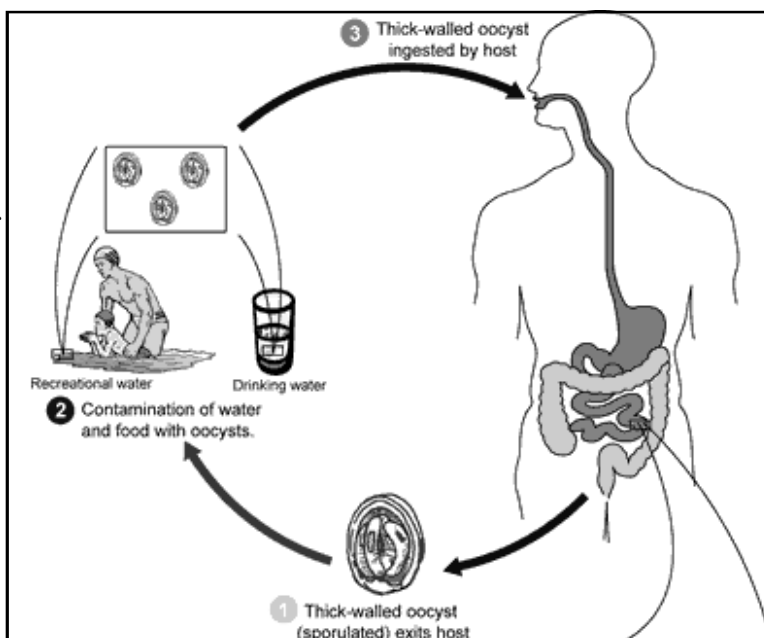
for diving, and there are no obstructions.

- Always wear a life jacket when on any boat.
- Children should wear coast-guard approved life jackets called Personal Floatation Devices when around deep water. "Swim wings," "water noodles" and other inflatable toys are NOT to be used as life-saving floatation devices.
- Use the "buddy system." Never swim alone or allow your child to.
- Don't drink alcohol while swimming or boating. It will slow your reaction time and diminish your swimming ability.
- Pay attention to local weather forecasts, and leave the water at the first sign of bad weather.

## Keeping Safe from Parasites in Water

Swimming in contaminated water can spread disease. One of the most common diseases spread this way is called Cryptosporidium, or "Crypto." This parasite causes diarrhea, and is often spread in pools because it is very resistant to chlorine. To avoid getting or spreading this disease, it is important to practice good pool hygiene. Most importantly, be sure to shower, using plenty of soap before entering and after leaving a pool. Also, be sure to take your children to the bathroom or change their diapers frequently. People who have diarrhea should not swim. Symptoms of Crypto appear within two to ten days after being exposed to the parasite, on average after seven days. If you believe you or your child is infected, talk to your healthcare provider.

The Berrien County Health Department works hard to protect the health of our community by doing water inspections of lakes and pools in the county. Each year, BCHD inspects about 50 public indoor pools and 100 public outdoor pools. They also take water samples for testing at thirteen public beaches, including Jean Klock Park, Tiscornia Park, and Silver Beach.



*Special thanks to Ken Priest for his help with this article!*

**The Berrien County Health Department has four locations to serve you:**

### Benton Harbor

769 Pipestone  
P.O. Box 706  
926-7121

M-139 Office  
2106 S. M-139  
927-5623

### Niles

1205 N. Front St.  
684-2800

### Three Oaks

21 N. Elm  
756-2008

Or visit us on the web at [www.bchdmi.org](http://www.bchdmi.org)

### Berrien County Health

#### Department:

Preventing Disease,  
Prolonging Life and  
Protecting the  
Health of the  
Community.



### Baby pool safety tips:

- Never leave a child alone, even for a second! Children can drown in as little as one inch of water.
- Keep emergency phone numbers ready, and learn CPR.
- Change pool water regularly. Frequent use of baby pools lead to build-up of dirt and bacteria.
- Children should wear tight-fitting plastic pants around diapers or pool-safe diapers.
- Completely empty the baby pool when not in use.

For more information, contact the Health Department's Environmental Health office at:

**927-5623**

Check out our website at  
[www.bchdmi.org](http://www.bchdmi.org)

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