



Cochise Health & Social Services

Mary Gomez, Director

"Building A Healthier Future"

*** MEDIA RELEASE ***

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Healthy Swimming -- Preventing Drowning and Recreational Water Illnesses

Cochise Health and Social Services reminds everyone that as we enter swimming season, it is crucial to be aware of the steps to promote healthy and safe swimming, including ways to prevent recreational water illnesses and injuries.

Every day in the United States, two children under the age of 14 years die from drowning; it is the leading cause of injury death for children one to four years old. And every year, thousands of Americans get sick with recreational water illnesses (RWIs), which are caused by germs found in places where we swim. Healthy and safe swimming means keeping children safe from drowning, as well as preventing the spread of the germs that cause RWIs.

Drowning is preventable, although each year thousands die and more are left with long-term consequences including memory problems, learning disabilities, and permanent loss of basic functioning (e.g., permanent vegetative state). To reduce the risk of drowning:

- Prepare by making sure that:
 - Everyone knows how to swim
 - Older children and adults know CPR
- When in the water, keep swimmers safe by:
 - Using life jackets that fit for younger or weaker swimmers
 - Providing continuous, attentive supervision close to the swimmers even if there is a lifeguard
 - Avoiding alcohol and drugs when swimming or watching swimmers
- When NOT in the water, prevent access to the water by:
 - Installing and maintaining barriers (for pools: 4-sided fencing and weight-bearing covers)
 - Using locks or alarms for windows and doors

For more information about drowning prevention, visit www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Water-Safety/index.html

Recreational water illnesses (like Cryptosporidium and E. Coli) are also preventable, but prevention requires swimmers to take an active role in protecting themselves and other swimmers since some germs can live for several days, even in the best-maintained swimming pools. Simple steps swimmers can take to help prevent the spread of germs that cause RWIs include:

- Don't swim when you have diarrhea. You can spread germs in the water and make others sick.
- Don't swallow pool water. Avoid getting water in your mouth.

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- Practice good hygiene. Shower with soap before swimming and wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers. Germs on your body end up in the water.
- Parents of young children should remember to
 - Wash their children before swimming (especially their bottoms).
 - Check diapers every 30–60 minutes. Change diapers in a bathroom or a diaper-changing area and not at poolside. Germs can spread in and around the pool.
 - Take your kids to the bathroom every 30–60 minutes. Waiting to hear "I have to go" may mean that it's too late.

For more information about healthy swimming, visit www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming/.

About Cochise Health and Social Services

Cochise Health and Social Services promotes health and quality of life for all Cochise County residents through education, service and leadership.

For more information, please visit our website at http://cochise.az.gov/cochise_health.aspx?id=260.

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