

# HEALTH ALERT



## ***Naegleria***

### **DANGEROUS PARASITE IN LAKE, RIVER AND POND WATER**

#### ***Naegleria***

Naegleria is a big name for a very tiny parasite (ameba) that is usually found in lakes, rivers and ponds.

#### ***Naegleria fowleri***

Naegleria fowleri causes an infection that develops when these parasites enter the human body through the nose, making their way to the brain.

#### **PAM** (primary amebic meningoencephalitis)

This infection causes PAM – a rare, life threatening disease. Symptoms of PAM can start as quickly as 1-7 days after infection. Symptoms include headache, fever, nausea, vomiting and stiff neck.

#### **THE DISEASE MOVES VERY QUICKLY**

As the disease moves into the brain, it causes swelling which leads to confusion, lack of attention, loss of balance, seizure and hallucinations. This disease usually results in death within 1-12 days.

*Seek immediate medical attention if you have any of these symptoms after swimming in freshwater.*



Department of Public Health  
and Environment

[www.co.washington.mn.us/specialtopics](http://www.co.washington.mn.us/specialtopics)



***About Naegleria***

# *Naegleria fowleri* Infection



## PREVENTION AND MORE

### SAFEST WAY TO PREVENT INFECTION

Do not swim in warm, standing water, such as lakes, rivers, ponds or storm water holding areas. Bacteria and other harmful organisms thrive in warm, standing water. There is a low level of *Naegleria fowleri* risk when entering any warm freshwater.

### INCREASED RISK IN SUMMER MONTHS

Avoid swimming or jumping into bodies of fresh water during the hot summer months when the water is stagnant, warm and water levels are low. As temperatures rise so does your chance of becoming infected.

### CLOSING YOUR NOSTRILS

Wear nose clips, hold your nose shut or keep your head out of the water when swimming, jumping, diving or waterskiing in any freshwater. Closing your nostrils may reduce your chance of becoming infected.

### PARASITE LIVES IN SAND AND SILT

Do not dig or stir up the sand and silt while swimming in shallow water. This infection cannot be spread from person to person.

### MORE INFORMATION

Healthy swimming web page at:  
[www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/](http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/)

Fact sheet on *Naegleria fowleri* and primary amebic meningoencephalitis (PAM): [www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/naegleria/naegleria.pdf](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/naegleria/naegleria.pdf)