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State Urges New Mexicans to Take Precautions in Public Swimming Pools
Health Department, Environment Department Investigating More Parasite Cases

(Santa Fe) -- The New Mexico Department of Health, New Mexico Environment Department and City of Albuquerque are working together to investigate and respond to an outbreak of swimming pool parasite cases in Bernalillo and San Juan counties.

The Environment Department directed the hyperchlorination of 23 pools in New Mexico, including pools in Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, San Juan County and one tribal pool after confirming cases of people with cryptosporidiosis (crypto) who entered those pools. The city of Albuquerque will perform weekly hyperchlorination of City operated pools for the near future.

The Department of Health has confirmed 10 outbreak-related cases of cryptosporidiosis, a diarrheal disease caused by parasites. One case is an 11-year-old from San Juan County. The other nine cases live in Bernalillo County and range in age from 2 years to 44 years. People sick with crypto related to this outbreak report swimming in several pools in Albuquerque, Farmington, Bloomfield and Isleta Pueblo.

“To protect yourself and your children, shower before entering pools and do not frequent pools if you are sick or have diarrhea,” said Health Secretary Dr. Alfredo Vigil.

The Department is also investigating 49 probable cases in Bernalillo, San Juan and Sandoval counties. The Department of Health reports all crypto cases to the Environment Department so it can follow up with pool operators and recommend hyperchlorination as needed.

“We will continue our investigation and require hyper chlorination of any pools confirmed to be

linked to the parasite,” said New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry. “The Environment Department will work with the Department of Health and other agencies to continue to monitor the outbreak and ensure swimmers are safe.”

Symptoms of crypto include diarrhea, abdominal cramping, nausea, vomiting and fever and can begin one to 12 days after exposure. Symptoms often come and go, but clear up within 30 days in healthy people. The disease may last longer and can contribute to death in immunocompromised individuals, especially those with HIV, who may be unable to clear the parasite.

The parasite is spread by multiple routes including fecal-oral, person to person and waterborne transmission. Outbreaks have been caused when bathers and swimmers who have contracted the parasite enter a public pool where others in the pool are exposed. The parasite can also be carried from one pool to another.

People should refrain from swimming while they are ill with diarrhea and if they are diagnosed with crypto, for an additional two weeks after symptoms resolve. People can continue to shed the parasite for two weeks after the diarrhea stops.

The Environment Department requests that those who have symptoms of crypto after swimming in pools contact Raj Solomon, Pool Program Manager at (505) 222-9500. Albuquerque residents who have symptoms may call 311.

For information about crypto and educational posters that pools could post, look up <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming/posters.htm>

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