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New Mexico's Swimming Parasite Cases on the Rise State Promotes Water Safety for Recreational Water Illness Prevention Week

(Santa Fe) — New Mexico, like the rest of the country, has been seeing an increase of Crypto cases, a chlorine resistant parasite. As a part of National Recreational Water Illness Prevention Week this week, the New Mexico Department of Health is reaching out to community health care providers so they know about symptoms, evaluation and treatment associated with Crypto.

Cryptosporidium, known as Crypto, is primarily associated with treated recreational water venues, such as pools and water parks. In 2005, the rate of reported Crypto infections among New Mexicans was 0.9 per 100,000 individuals. In 2006, this rate more than doubled to 2.3 Crypto cases per 100,000. Preliminary data for 2007 suggests that the rate doubled again to 5.8 cases per 100,000.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that swimming is the second most popular recreational activity in the United States — and the most popular activity for children. This use of recreational water, however, is associated with public health consequences such as drowning, injuries, and spread of infectious diseases.

The New Mexico Environment Department, Bernalillo County Office of Environmental Health and City of Albuquerque Environmental Health Department inspect public pools to ensure public safety. The agencies join the New Mexico Department of Health in encouraging people to be aware of recreational water illnesses and the important role healthy swimming behaviors play in stopping the spread of these illnesses.

Germs on and in swimmers' bodies end up in the water and can make other people sick. Even healthy swimmers can get sick from recreational water illnesses, but the young, elderly, pregnant women and immunosuppressed persons are especially at risk. Specific actions you can take to promote healthy swimming include:

- Do not swim when you have diarrhea.
- Do not swallow pool or other recreational water or get the water in your mouth.
- Shower before swimming (children too!).
- Wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers.
- Take children on bathroom breaks or change diapers often.
- Change children's diapers in a bathroom, not at poolside.

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For more information about healthy swimming, look up
<http://www.nmhealth.org/eheb/Rec%20Water.html> or <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming>.

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