

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



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Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CONFIRMS ONE CASE OF *NAEGLERIA FOWLERI* INFECTION

TALLAHASSEE- The Florida Department of Health (DOH) has confirmed one Florida case infected with *Naegleria fowleri* in Glades County. *Naegleria fowleri* is a microscopic single-celled living amoeba. The amoeba can cause a rare infection of the brain called primary amebic meningoencephalitis (PAM) that destroys brain tissue and is usually fatal. The amoeba is commonly found in warm freshwater such as lakes, rivers, ponds and canals.

Infections can happen when contaminated water enters the body through the nose. Once the amoeba enters the nose, it travels to the brain where it causes PAM. Infections usually occur when temperatures increase for prolonged periods of time, which results in higher water temperatures and lower water levels. The peak season for this amoeba is July, August and September.

"The effects of PAM on the individuals who contract the amoeba are tragic," said Dr. Carina Blackmore, Interim State Epidemiologist. "We want to remind Floridians to be wary when swimming, jumping or diving in fresh water when water temperatures are high and water levels are low. If you are partaking in recreational swimming activities during this time, please take necessary precautions and remind your family and friends to do the same."

Naegleria fowleri infections are rare. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 28 infections were reported in the U.S. from 2003 to 2012. The infections occurred from exposure to contaminated recreational water. You cannot be infected with *Naegleria fowleri* by drinking contaminated water and the amoeba is not found in salt water.

Initial symptoms of PAM usually start within one to seven days after infection and may include headache, fever, nausea, or vomiting. Other symptoms can include stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance, seizures, and hallucinations. After the start of symptoms, the disease progresses rapidly.

Naegleria fowleri is found in many warm freshwater lakes, ponds and rivers in the United States, but is more common in southern states. The low number of infections makes it difficult to know why a few people have been infected compared to the millions of other people that used the same or similar waters across the U.S.

The only way to prevent PAM is to avoid participation in freshwater-related activities. You may reduce your risk by:

- Limiting the amount of water going up your nose. Hold your nose shut, use nose clips, or keep your head above water when taking part in warm freshwater-related activities.
- Avoid water-related activities in warm freshwater during periods of high water temperature and low water levels.
- Avoid digging in, or stirring up, the sediment while taking part in water-related activities in shallow, warm freshwater areas.

Florida Department of Health

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DOH has posted a public service announcement to our Online Newsroom. View the video at <http://youtu.be/I0DZMUBhI8E>. We also have a version in Spanish. For more information about *Naegleria fowleri*, you can visit the CDC website <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/naegleria/>

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