

Mission:

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



Rick Scott
Governor

John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS
State Surgeon General & Secretary

Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 11, 2013

Contact: Office of Communications
(850) 245-4111

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH REMINDS RESIDENTS OF DANGERS OF NAEGLERIA FOWLERI

TALLAHASSEE - The Florida Department of Health (DOH) cautions those who swim frequently in Florida's lakes and rivers during warm temperatures about the possible presence of *Naegleria fowleri*. Contact with this amoeba is rare, but targets a person's brain and usually results in death. Adverse health effects on humans can be prevented by avoiding nasal contact with the waters, since the amoeba enters through the nasal passages.

Though there are only 123 reported cases since 1962, *Naegleria fowleri* or "brain-eating amoeba", can cause Primary Amebic Meningoencephalitis (PAM) disease which usually leads to death once infected.

As a precaution, health officials recommend the following:

- Avoid water-related activities in bodies of warm freshwater, hot springs, and thermally polluted water such as water around power plants.
- Avoid water-related activities in warm freshwater during periods of high water temperature and low water levels.
- Hold the nose shut or use nose clips when taking part in water-related activities in bodies of warm freshwater such as lakes, rivers, or hot springs.
- Avoid digging in or stirring up the sediment while taking part in water-related activities in shallow, warm freshwater areas
- Please note exposure to the amoeba may also occur when using neti pots to rinse your sinuses of cold/allergy-related congestion with unfiltered tap water. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) advises you to clean these devices thoroughly after every use and filter the water before placing it in the pot.

If you experience any of these symptoms after swimming in any warm body of water, contact your health care provider immediately: headache, fever, nausea, disorientation, vomiting, stiff neck, seizures, loss of balance, or hallucinations. It is essential to seek medical attention right away, as PAM usually becomes fatal within five days of exposure.

Remember, this disease is rare and smart prevention strategies can allow for a safe and relaxing summer swim season.

For the latest information about the amoeba please visit the CDC's website at <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/naegleria/general.html>. To find out more about the use of neti pots, visit <http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm316375.htm>

The Florida Department of Health works to protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county, & community efforts.

Florida Department of Health

Office of Communications
4052 Bald Cypress Way Bin A04 • Tallahassee, FL 32399
PHONE: 850-245/4111 • FAX 850/488-6495

www.FloridasHealth.com

TWITTER: HealthyFLA
FACEBOOK: FLDepartmentofHealth
YOUTUBE: fldoh

Follow us on Twitter at [@HealthyFla](#) and on [Facebook](#). For news story ideas, interviews, videos and more from DOH Communications visit the DOH [Online Newsroom](#).

###