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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **RECREATIONAL WATER ILLNESS AND INJURY PREVENTION: STAY HEALTHY AND SAFE WHILE ENJOYING THE WATER!**

STOCKTON, CA (May 28, 2014) – With proper precautions, water activities are fun, cool in the hot summer, and a great way to exercise. Although swimming offers many health benefits, pools and other recreational water venues are also places where germs can spread and injuries can happen. Learn how to stay healthy and safe while enjoying the water!

#### **PREVENT ILLNESSES**

Every year, thousands of Americans get sick with recreational water illnesses (RWIs), which are caused by germs found in water where people swim and play. The germs are spread by swallowing or having contact with, contaminated water in places such as swimming pools, hot tubs/spas, interactive water fountains, lakes, rivers, and oceans.

Contrary to popular belief, chlorine and other disinfectants do not kill germs instantly. While most germs are killed within minutes, Crypto (short for *Cryptosporidium*) can live for days. Before they are killed, these germs can cause RWIs, including gastrointestinal, skin, ear, respiratory, eye, neurologic, and wound infections. The most commonly reported RWI is diarrhea caused by germs such as Crypto, Giardia, Shigella, norovirus and E. coli O157:H7. Swallowing just a mouthful of water that contains these germs can make you sick.

Since we all share the water where we swim, it is important to do our part to keep ourselves, our families, and our friends healthy. **To help protect yourself and others from recreational water illnesses, follow these simple and effective steps all swimmers can take each time you swim:**

#### **Keep feces (poop), and urine (pee) out of the water.**

- Stay out of the water when you have diarrhea.
- Practice good hygiene (germs on your body end up in the water).
  - Shower with soap before you start swimming.
  - Wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers.

#### **Parents of young children should take a few extra steps.**

- Wash your children thoroughly (especially their bottoms) with soap and water before they go swimming.
- Take children on bathroom breaks every 60 minutes and check diapers every 30–60 minutes.
- Change diapers in a bathroom or diaper-changing area, not at poolside where germs can flow into the water. Thoroughly clean the diaper changing area.
- Teach your children to avoid swallowing the water where they swim and play.

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## **PREVENT DROWNING**

Drowning is the leading cause of injury death among children 1–4 years old. Every day in the U. S., ten people die from drowning, and two of those ten are children under the age of 15 years. Of drowning victims who survive and are treated in emergency rooms, more than half are hospitalized or transferred for further care. These individuals often experience brain damage, which can cause memory problems, learning disabilities, or permanent loss of basic functioning.

### **Keep swimmers safe in the water.**

- Provide continuous, attentive supervision close to swimmers.
- Keep an eye on children at all times; kids can drown in seconds and in silence.
- Make sure everyone knows how to swim.
- Avoid using air-filled swimming aids (such as “water wings”) with children in place of life jackets or life preservers.
- Know cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- Protect against sunburn by using a sunscreen with at least SPF 15 and both UVA and UVB protection.

### **Prevent access to water when pool is not in use.**

- Install and maintain barriers such as 4-sided fencing and weight-bearing pool covers.
- Use locks/alarms for windows and doors.

## **PREVENT POOL CHEMICAL INJURIES**

Pool chemicals are added to water to kill germs and maximize disinfection. However, the same pool chemicals can also harm us if they're not handled and stored safely. Preventable injuries from pool chemicals led to nearly 5,000 emergency room visits in the United States during 2012. Nearly half of these preventable injuries were in children and teenagers, and more than a third of these preventable injuries occurred at a home rather than a community pool.

Residential pool owners and public pool operators can follow these **simple and effective steps to prevent pool chemical injuries:**

- Read and follow directions on product labels.
- Wear appropriate safety equipment, such as goggles and masks, as directed, when handling pool chemicals.
- Secure pool chemicals to protect people and animals.
  - Keep young children away when handling chemicals.
- NEVER mix different pool chemicals with each other, especially chlorine products with acid.
- Pre-dissolve pool chemicals ONLY when directed by product label.
  - Add pool chemicals to water, NEVER water to any pool chemicals.

### **For more information, visit the following websites:**

San Joaquin County Public Health Services (PHS) at [www.sjcphs.org](http://www.sjcphs.org)

California Department of Public Health (CDPH) at [www.cdph.ca.gov](http://www.cdph.ca.gov)

U. S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming>

For downloadable pool safety tips [click here for English](#) and [here for Spanish](#).

Attachment: Pool Safety Tips (English and Spanish)

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