

Media Release

Cryptosporidiosis alert for Sutherland Shire

Tuesday, 5 March 2024

Due to ongoing high rates of cryptosporidiosis in the area, South Eastern Sydney Public Health Unit is reminding the Sutherland community not to swim in public pools for at least two weeks after they've had diarrhoea.

Public Health Unit Director, Dr Vicky Sheppeard said there has been 61 cases of cryptosporidiosis reported from Sutherland residents so far this year, compared to less than 10 cases notified during the same period in any year over the past 5 years.

Dr Sheppeard said the majority of local cases were seen in children under ten years old.

"Cryptosporidiosis is commonly acquired by swimming in and swallowing water contaminated with cryptosporidium parasites," Dr Sheppeard said.

"Cryptosporidiosis case numbers underestimate the number of people affected by the infection, as not everyone goes to the doctor, and not everyone who visits the doctor will have a test.

"Cryptosporidiosis is a diarrhoeal disease caused by the parasite, *Cryptosporidium*, which infects the intestine and is a common cause of diarrhoea in young children. Other symptoms can include nausea, vomiting, fever, headache, and loss of appetite.

"The parasite survives for many days, even in well-maintained chlorinated pools," she said. People who have had diarrhoea should:

- avoid swimming for at least two weeks after symptoms resolve
- avoid sharing towels for at least two weeks after symptoms resolve
- avoid handling food for at least 48 hours after symptoms resolve
- children who have diarrhoea should be kept home from preschool, childcare or playgroup until 24 hours after the diarrhoea has completely stopped.

To avoid catching cryptosporidiosis:

- avoid swimming in estuaries and inland waterways (e.g. rivers, creeks, dams) during and for at least three days after heavy rain
- avoid swimming at ocean beaches during and for at least one day after heavy rain
- avoid swallowing water when swimming

- wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds after using the toilet, handling animals or their manure, changing nappies, working in the garden and before preparing food or drinks
- do not drink untreated water (for example, from lakes or streams). Boiling water by bringing to a rolling boil is sufficient to kill *Cryptosporidium*.

The increase in cases has been experienced across NSW, with further information available at [NSW Health](#). More information on cryptosporidiosis is available on the [NSW Health website](#).

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