

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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Risks of Swimming in Freshwater Lakes, Ponds and Canals

Glades County – A confirmed case of *Naegleria fowleri* has been reported in Glades County. *Naegleria fowleri* (commonly referred to as the "brain-eating amoeba"), is a microscopic amoeba which is a single-celled living organism. It can cause a rare and devastating infection of the brain called primary amebic meningoencephalitis (PAM). 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 (which destroys brain tissue) and is usually fatal. Infections usually occur when it is hot 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.

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 1 to 7 days after infection. The initial symptoms 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 mostly in southern-tier 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 a *Naegleria fowleri* infection is not to participate 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.

For more information about *Naegleria fowleri*, you can visit the CDC website
<http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/naegleria/>

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