

# Epi Update for Friday, May 17, 2024

CENTER FOR ACUTE DISEASE EPIDEMIOLOGY (CADE)

## Iowa Department of Health and Human Services

Items for this week's Epi Update include

- **May is Lyme Disease Awareness Month**
- **CDC: Unintentional drowning deaths on the rise nationally**
- **Prevent gastrointestinal illnesses when enjoying recreational water**
- **Infographic: Swim area safety**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

### May is Lyme Disease Awareness Month

Lyme disease is the most common vector-borne disease in the U.S. In 2023, 212 cases were identified in Iowa. Lyme disease is caused by bacteria transmitted to humans through the bite of infected blacklegged ticks (also known as deer ticks). Ticks are most likely to spread the bacteria during their pre-adult stage (nymph), which are most common between May and July and found in tall grasses and brush of wooded areas.

In addition to Lyme disease, other tickborne diseases in Iowa include babesiosis, anaplasmosis, ehrlichiosis, spotted fever group rickettsiosis, and tularemia. To protect yourself from tickborne illnesses:

- Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellents containing DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, or 2-undecanone. Follow product instructions.
- Wear clothing treated with permethrin.
- Shower as soon as possible after spending time outdoors.
- Check for ticks daily. Ticks can hide under the armpits, behind the knees, in the hair, and in the groin.
- Tumble clothes in a dryer on high heat for 10 minutes to kill ticks on dry clothing after you come indoors. If the clothes are damp, additional time may be needed.

For more information about tickborne diseases, visit

[hhs.iowa.gov/public-health/center-acute-disease-epidemiology/tick-borne-and-mosquito-borne-disease](https://hhs.iowa.gov/public-health/center-acute-disease-epidemiology/tick-borne-and-mosquito-borne-disease).

For Iowa Lyme disease case data, visit [hhs.iowa.gov/public-health/data/health/lyme-disease](https://hhs.iowa.gov/public-health/data/health/lyme-disease).

### CDC: Unintentional drowning deaths on the rise nationally

As highlighted by a recent CDC Vital Signs report, unintentional drowning death rates have increased since 2019. Drowning causes approximately 4,000 U.S. deaths each year and disproportionately affects some age, racial, and ethnic groups. Drowning rates were highest among children aged one to four years, as well as among non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native and non-Hispanic Black or African American persons.

Basic swimming and water safety skills training can reduce the risk for drowning. Over half of U.S. adults reported never having taken a swimming lesson. Swimming skill and swimming lesson participation differ by age, sex, and race and ethnicity. The *U.S. National Water Safety Action Plan* provides recommendations and tools for communities and organizations to enhance basic swimming and water safety skills training.

To view the full CDC Vital Signs report, visit

[www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/wr/mm7320e1.htm?s\\_cid=mm7320e1\\_w](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/wr/mm7320e1.htm?s_cid=mm7320e1_w).

For more information about the *U.S. National Water Safety Action Plan*, visit [www.watersafetyusa.org/](https://www.watersafetyusa.org/).

## Prevent gastrointestinal illnesses when enjoying recreational water

In addition to basic water safety practices to prevent drowning, keep the following in mind to prevent gastrointestinal illness from bacteria and parasites (e.g. *Cryptosporidium*, also known as crypto) that can spread via contaminated water:

- Don't swim if you have diarrhea. If you have been ill with diarrhea recently, wait until you have been symptom free for at least 24 hours before swimming. If diagnosed with crypto, do not swim for at least two weeks after diarrhea stops.
- Shower before and after swimming.
- Change diapers in a bathroom or changing area – not near the pool.
- Don't swallow the water.

Pools, hot tubs, and water playgrounds with proper chlorine or bromine levels and pH are less likely to spread germs than untreated water sources such as lakes/streams/ponds. However, properly treated water may still *Cryptosporidium*, which is more resistant to chlorination than other bacteria and parasites and can survive in properly treated water for more than seven days.

For more information on recreational water illnesses, visit [www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/](http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/).

## Infographic: Swim area safety

**SWIM AREA SAFETY**  
Millions Enjoy the Water, so What's the Risk?  
• 4,000 fatal drownings per year  
• 45% of those while swimming in natural waters; 20% in pools  
• Over 20% of population can't swim

**Water Depth**  
Depths of chest height or more pose significant risk to nonswimmers.

**Underwater Hazards**  
Drop-offs, rocks, trash, debris, weeds, and muddy bottoms threaten safety & enjoyment.

**Water Quality**  
Pollution and contamination pose health risks. Obey signs. Avoid foam, scum, or algae.

**Water Clarity**  
Visibility varies in natural waters. Murky water hides hazards and hinders rescue.

**Water Temperature**  
Check water temperature before entering. Limit time in water that feels cold.

**Moving Water**  
Currents & waves in rivers, oceans & lakes pose risks for all swimmers. Currents may be hard to see & very difficult to swim against. If necessary, swim across the current. Rip currents account for 80% of ocean rescues.

**Safety Tips**

- Review area safety, based on group abilities, prior to entering the water.
- If unable to judge area safety, choose designated swim areas at campgrounds, state parks, and federal recreational areas.
- Keep nonswimmers away from deep water until they learn how to swim.
- All ability groups should consider wearing life jackets as an extra layer of protection, particularly in deep, murky, or moving water.
- Learn how to prevent, recognize, and respond to drowning incidents.
- If your group lacks those skills, swim where professionally trained lifeguards are on duty.

**Remember: Water safety begins with you! Visit [watersafetyusa.org](http://watersafetyusa.org) for more information.**

To view in full size, visit [www.watersafetyusa.org/uploads/7/0/6/0/70608285/safe\\_area\\_infographic\\_v6.pdf](http://www.watersafetyusa.org/uploads/7/0/6/0/70608285/safe_area_infographic_v6.pdf).

## Meeting announcements and training opportunities

Join Iowa HHS and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) on Wednesday, June 19 at 12 noon for a webinar, *To Prescribe or Not to Prescribe: Implementing Antimicrobial Stewardship in Your Veterinary Practice*. Presenters will cover antimicrobial stewardship (AMS) in veterinary practices, roles and responsibilities of veterinary personnel, clinical resources, and how to start an AMS program. RACE CE credit is available. To register, visit [iastate.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_v7j6N2ZZQ4udF2RciqQ8oQ#/registration](https://iastate.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_v7j6N2ZZQ4udF2RciqQ8oQ#/registration).

**Have a healthy and happy week!**  
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