## Healthy and Safe Swimming Week 2018

***Frolicking in the water can be fun for the whole family, just remember these tips to Swim Healthy and Stay Healthy!***

Dear Editor,

As the summer swim season approaches, adults and children will be flocking to local pools for fun in the sun and exercise. Not only is swimming a great way to have fun with family and friends, it is also a fun form of physical activity. Just 2.5 hours of water-based (or other forms of) physical activity per week have health benefits for everyone. However, swimming, like any form of physical activity, is not risk-free. While sunburn and injuries might be the most well-known health risks associated with swimming, diarrhea is another culprit — and outbreaks of diarrheal illness linked to swimming are on the rise.

That’s why it’s so important to stay out of the water if you have diarrhea. We all share the water we swim in, and we each need to do our part to help keep ourselves and our families and friends healthy. Just one diarrheal incident in the water can release enough germs such that swallowing a mouthful of the water can cause diarrhea lasting up to 2–3 weeks.

Many people think chlorine will kill germs in the water instantly, but some germs can survive days in properly chlorinated pools. A diarrhea-causing germ called *Cryptosporidium* (or Crypto) can survive in an adequately chlorinated pool for more than 1 week. Crypto has become the leading cause of disease outbreaks linked to swimming.

You can help protect yourself and your family and friends from diarrheal illness by following a few simple and effective steps while at the pool this summer and year round:

* Stay out of the water if you have diarrhea – swim diapers will not contain diarrhea if your child has an accident in the pool!
* Do not poop in the pool.
* Teach children not to swallow the water.
* Do your part! Report it if you or your child has a diarrheal incident while swimming.
* Don’t swim dirty! Chemicals in the pool clean best when you keep dirt, lotion, and oil out of the pool.

Every hour—everyone out!

* Take kids on frequent bathroom breaks.
* Check diapers and change them in a bathroom or diaper changing area—not poolside—to keep germs away from the pool.

Healthy swimming is not just about the steps the pool operators, beach managers, and health departments take. We all need to do our part to help keep ourselves, our families, and friends healthy this summer and year round, to maximize the fun and health benefits of swimming. For more information, as well as fun activities and resources, visit [www.swimhealthy.va.com](http://www.swimhealthy.va.com).