

June 14, 2018

**FLORIDA HEALTH IN NASSAU COUNTY  
REMINDS THE PUBLIC OF PRECAUTIONS TO  
HELP PREVENT PRIMARY AMEBIC MENINGOENCEPHALITIS, ACCIDENTAL  
DROWNINGS, AND PROMOTE SUN SAFETY**



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**Fernandina Beach, Fla.**—The Florida Department of Health in Nassau County (DOH-Nassau) is reminding the public of the importance of preventing Primary Amebic Meningoencephalitis (PAM). Now that summer is in full swing Florida residents and visitors spend more time outdoors, swimming in lakes, rivers, and springs. Spending time engaging in outdoor water activities increases the likelihood of contact with *Naegleria fowleri*. *Naegleria fowleri*, (the causative agent for PAM) is a fresh water amoeba commonly found in fresh water lakes, rivers, and hot springs.

**Primary Amebic Meningoencephalitis**

Infection from *Naegleria fowleri* is most common during the summer months of July, August, and September. Infection with *Naegleria fowleri* typically occurs when the amoeba enters the body through the nose, travels up to the brain and spinal cord where it destroys the brain tissue causing the Primary Amebic Meningoencephalitis. Since 1962, 34 cases of PAM have been reported in Florida, all of which have been fatal.

Nassau County residents and visitors engaging in water related activities should remain diligent in protecting themselves from PAM by following these recommendations:

- Avoiding water-related activities in bodies of warm freshwater, hot springs, and thermally-polluted water such as water around power plants.
- Avoiding water-related activities in warm freshwater during periods of high water temperature and low water levels.
- Holding the nose shut or using nose clips when taking part in water-related activities in bodies of warm freshwater such as lakes, rivers, or hot springs.
- Avoiding digging or stirring up sediment while taking part in water-related activities.

For more information about the *Naegleria fowleri* and Primary Amebic Meningoencephalitis (PAM), visit the Florida Department of Health website at <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/primary-amebic-meningoencephalitis/index.html>.

## **Drowning**

Annually, Florida leads the country in drowning deaths of children 1-4 years of age and drowning in Florida is a top 3 leading cause of death for children under the age of 10.

The public is reminded to take the following precautions to help prevent accidental drownings:

- Keep children within arm's reach around water.
- Ensure young children understand that they are not to go swimming without adult supervision.
- Latch gates, lock doors, set alarms to create layered boundaries between children and sources of water.
- Ensure emergency contact numbers and rescue equipment are easily acceptable.
- Drowning is silent and fast, constant supervision is your child's best source of protection.

For more information about pool and water safety, visit <http://www.watersmartfl.com/>

## **Sun Safety in the Sunshine State**

Florida, is well known for its sandy beaches and endless rays of sunshine. However, thousands of people every year fall victim to sun and heat related illnesses. Floridians and visitors should take necessary precautions to protect their skin from the harmful rays of the sun.

- Always use sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher and don't forget to periodically reapply as necessary.
- Minimize sun exposure during the peak midday (10-4) hours.
- Use protective barriers such as sunglasses, hats, and light clothing to block full sun exposure.
- Be able to identify risk factors for UV radiation such as pale skin, light colored hair, and a family history of skin cancer.
- Know the signs of heat illness such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

For more information about sun safety, visit

<http://www.floridahealth.gov/newsroom/2016/03/032516-sun-safety.html>

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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