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BE HEALTHY AND PRACTICE SAFE SWIMMING THIS SUMMER

DOH-Okaloosa Observes Healthy and Safe Swimming Week



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Ft. Walton Beach, Fla. — This week, Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County (DOH-Okaloosa) is observing Healthy and Safe Swimming Week and encourages the public to maximize the health benefits of swimming. Water-based physical activity has health benefits for everyone, but it does come with some risks. Everyone plays a role in preventing illnesses and injuries linked to the water we use and enjoy. Every day in the United States, two children younger than 14 years of age die from drowning.

“Drowning is a leading cause of injury death for children ages 1 to 4 years of age,” stated Dr. Karen A. Chapman, Director of DOH-Okaloosa. “It’s important that you and your family take precautions before getting into the water to ensure a healthy and safe day at the beach or pool.”

DOH-Okaloosa recommends swimmers and parents of young swimmers to do the following before getting into the water:

- Make sure everyone knows how to swim
- Use life jackets appropriately
- Check water visibility
- Check to see if a lifeguard is on duty
- Provide continuous and attentive supervision to swimmers
- Protect against sunburn by using a sunscreen with at least an SPF of 15 or more
- Know CPR and bring a first aid kit

To protect swimmers’ health and safety, DOH-Okaloosa uses state and local standards to inspect public pools, hot tubs, spas, water playgrounds, and other places with treated water.

Though chlorine in public pools can kill most germs within minutes, some germs can survive for days. Health concerns can occur when dirt, sweat, urine, fecal matter, or blood from swimmers’ bodies mix with pool water. It’s important that every swimmer:

- Stay out of the water if you have diarrhea
- Shower before you get in the water
- Don’t pee or poop in the water
- Don’t swallow the water

Parents should take kids on bathroom breaks, check diapers and change them in a bathroom or diaper changing area—not poolside—to keep germs away from the pool.

DOH-Okaloosa conducts weekly saltwater beach water quality monitoring at 13 sites through the Healthy Beaches Monitoring Program. The goal of the program is to prevent waterborne illness by advising Okaloosa residents and visitors against recreating in waters potentially contaminated with human pathogens. For the most updated results for the saltwater testing, go visit okaloosa.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/environmental-health/healthy-beaches.

For more information about how to swim in a healthy and safe way, visit www.waterproofil.com or www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming.

About Healthy and Safe Swimming Week

Formerly known as Recreational Water Illness and Injury (RWII) Prevention Week, the week before Memorial Day has been designated National Healthy and Safe Swimming Week. Healthy and Safe Swimming Week 2016 will take place May 23-29, 2016, marking the 12th anniversary of this observance. Each year, Healthy and Safe Swimming Week focuses on simple steps swimmers and pool operators can take to help ensure a healthy and safe swimming experience for everyone. It focuses on the role of swimmers, aquatics and beach staff, residential pool owners, and public health officials in preventing drowning, pool chemical injuries, and outbreaks of illnesses.

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/healthywater/observances/hss-week.

About the Florida Department of Health

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

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