Cryptosporidium in swimming pools can cause of diarrhea

*Maintaining pool hygiene and self management are key to warding off this dangerous parasite*

New Delhi, 19 May 2017: In what can be called as avoiding another risk factor in the summer months, experts have advised against consumption of swimming pool water. Any inadvertent ingestion of even chlorinated pool water can produce cryptosporidium which results in stomach upset. Statistics indicate that the prevalence of this disease in diarrhoea patients in India is 1.3% from Northern India, 4.5% from the eastern part of the country (West Bengal), 5.5% from South to West (Mumbai), and 13.1% from South India.

"Cryptosporidium" or "Crypto", the microscopic parasite can make otherwise healthy adults and children feel incredibly sick with stomach cramps, nausea, and bouts of diarrhea lasting up to three weeks. Once a pool or water playground is infected with crypto, it is easy to spread, but not easy to get rid of. The parasite can survive up to 10 days in properly chlorinated water, and it takes just a swig to get sick.

Speaking about this, Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr R N Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement, said, "The infection begins when a person ingests the one-celled cryptosporidium parasite. There are some strains of cryptosporidium which can cause more serious issues. This parasite can travel to the intestinal tract and settle into the walls of the intestines. Once this happens, more cells are produced and shed in massive quantities into the feces becoming highly contagious with time. It is difficult to eradicate this parasite because of its resistance to many chlorine-based disinfectants and filters."

The only way to ensure the health of the water once it has been infected is to close the pool and treat it with extremely high levels of chlorine. At an individual level, it is important to take precautions when swimming in pools.

Adding further, Dr Aggarwal, said, "Avoid swallowing any water and rinse it off in the shower once you get out of the pool. It is also better to avoid the pool while you are sick and wait for two weeks after symptoms subside from a suspected case of crypto before going swimming."
Additionally, the following steps can be taken as part of self-management against contracting this disease.

- Use the toilet before entering the pool
- Shower and wash thoroughly all over with soap before entering the pool
- 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.

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About IMA: Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2, 60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

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