



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## ADPH recommends precautions for swimming safety after children become ill at Opelika Splash Park

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Five children who had played in the Splash Park at the Opelika Sportsplex and Aquatic Center between June 12 and June 18 have been identified with symptoms of severe gastrointestinal illness. Four children have been hospitalized at East Alabama Medical Center; one of them was subsequently transferred to Children's Hospital of Alabama. Three of the five children have been found positive for E. coli infection.

"We are continuing to work with the medical community to identify the extent of the problem," said Dr. Mary McIntyre, medical officer of the Bureau of Communicable Disease, Alabama Department of Public Health.

Seven day care centers in Lee County had taken children to the Splash Pool at some time between June 12 and June 20. Public health officials are working with each day care center to contact the families of each child to determine the extent of illness.

Illnesses in recreational waters are caused by germs spread by swallowing, breathing in mists or aerosols or having contact with contaminated water in swimming pools, water parks, hot tubs, interactive fountains, water play areas, lakes, rivers or oceans. Infection may also occur by touching the environment in petting zoos and other animal exhibits or by eating food prepared by people who did not wash their hands well after using the toilet.

The Health Department and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend following the healthy swimming guidelines for people using recreational water facilities:

#### Three steps for all swimmers

1. DO NOT swim when you have diarrhea.
2. AVOID swallowing water when swimming or playing in lakes, ponds, streams, swimming pools and backyard "kiddie" pools.
3. Shower with soap before swimming and wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers. Germs on your body end up in the water.

#### Three steps for parents of young children

1. Take your children on bathroom breaks or check diapers often.
2. Change diapers in a bathroom or a diaper-changing area and not at poolside.

3. Wash your children thoroughly with soap and water before they go swimming.

Visit CDC's Healthy Swimming Web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming> to learn how to protect yourself and others by following tips for healthy swimming.

The Splash Park was closed June 20 for testing. Parents have been asked to be alert for symptoms of illness. If a child has nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or abdominal cramps parents should seek medical attention for their child. Public health and City of Opelika officials are monitoring the situation.

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