



**Putnam County Department of Health**  
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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Swimming Offers Relief from Summer Heat, But Is Not Hazard Free**

Brewster, NY—Swimming and other recreational water sports offer relief from the hot, humid days of summer. They also provide a great way to exercise, and thousands of Putnam County families swim safely in pools and open water countless times during the warm weather. Still it is important to remember they are not hazard free. Drowning and recreational water illnesses (RWIs) are the top two risks that can occur.

Drowning can happen in pools or open water, such as lakes, rivers, oceans, and even man-made structures like a reservoir or canal. Without life guards, lakes and rivers are particularly hazardous. Currents, submerged rocks or wood, and concealed vegetation each present different problems, but all may be deadly. Even experienced swimmers can have problems in open water. Pools present other dangers, particularly to young children who cannot swim, or swim poorly. Drowning can happen quickly. **Never leave a child unattended** even for a moment, and **avoid all distractions**, such as reading or talking on the phone. Improper fencing, faulty or unlatched gates, and missing drain covers all increase the risks.

Open water swimming tips:

- **Know the water**—Do not go into open water without knowing the possible dangers specific to the site's water and weather conditions (currents, submerged rocks, sudden storms, etc.)
- **Know your limits.** Drowning often happens when a person swims and gets too tired. Learn to swim, float and tread water, but don't overestimate your abilities.
- **Always use the buddy system**—never swim alone.
- **Sites with lifeguards** are best.

Pool swimming tips:

**Proper barriers and alarms.** If you have a backyard pool, fencing must be installed on all sides with self-closing, self-locking gates that open outward. The fence should be at least 4 feet tall. Remove ladders from above ground pools. If your house is one of the sides, use an alarm system to alert you if your child goes outside. The complete NYS Building Code requirements are available online. (Link is below.)

- **Do not use the pool if drain covers are missing.** Long hair, arms, legs and fingers can get stuck in the drain's current and pull a person under water.

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- **Remove pool toys when you are done swimming.** If left in the water, toys can attract younger children who may reach for them and fall in.

Recreational water illnesses, or RWIs, are caused by germs that are swallowed or inhaled through splashed water or mist from swimming pools, water parks and sprays, or even lakes, rivers or oceans. Swimmers share the water—and the germs in it—with other bathers, and this can result in a variety of gastrointestinal, skin, ear, respiratory, eye and wound infections. The most commonly reported RWI is diarrheal illness caused by germs such as *E. coli* or Crypto, short for *Cryptosporidium*. Remember, chlorine does not kill germs instantly, and some germs including Crypto, are chlorine tolerant. The best prevention is good hygiene. Don't swim if you are sick; take bathroom breaks every 60 minutes; wash hands after changing diapers. Take a shower with soap before swimming, and pay special care not to swallow the water you swim in. Parents of young children should check diapers frequently and change them in the appropriate facilities—not poolside, where germs can wind up in the water.

The Child Advocacy Center of Putnam County has served over 2,000 children and their families since opening in 1999. The CAC's mission is to reduce the trauma for a victim of child abuse by coordinating a joint response in order to protect children and their families. In addition, the CAC provides health information and education to prevent serious child injuries and deaths.

The mission of the Health Department of Putnam County is to improve and protect the health of Putnam County residents through prevention of illness and injury. Core services include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit our website at [www.putnamcountyny.com](http://www.putnamcountyny.com); or visit our social media sites on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/putnamhealth](http://www.facebook.com/putnamhealth) and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY.

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### More information:

Healthy swimming: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/>

NYS Building Code requirements for residential pools: <http://www.dos.ny.gov/DCEA/currpoolreq.htm>