



PUTNAM COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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www.putnamcountyny.gov/health

A PHAB-ACCREDITED HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Swimming Safely Takes on New Meaning as Putnam Pools Begin to Reopen;
*Drowning Risk Returns in Summer***

Brewster, NY—Gathering with friends for swimming and other activities are great ways to enjoy the summer and cool off. These activities provide relaxation, recreation, and exercise, and thousands of Putnam County families and visitors enjoy them every year. The summer of 2020 is of course different. While drowning remains a risk in any body of water, people in Putnam and around the country, have another concern to contend with now. The coronavirus, which causes COVID-19, continues to spread, and social or physical distancing, good hand hygiene, and face coverings remain the best protections. This week Governor Cuomo gave the green light to local leadership to reopen pools provided that plans could be put in place to follow NYS-issued guidance regarding distancing, masks and enhanced cleaning.

“Summer is finally and officially here,” said County Executive MaryEllen Odell, “and our outdoor pools have begun to reopen. We have taken a good look at our health metrics with our Health Commissioner Dr. Nesheiwat. Fortunately all are continuing in the right direction. His environmental health director and staff are working with our pool personnel to assist them with implementing the new guidance.”

Michael J. Nesheiwat, MD, said, “Pool operators are submitting individual plans describing how they will uphold social distancing and mask-wearing practices, and what measures for cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces will be in place. As long as we can assure these efforts, we can continue to improve our metrics and proceed to the next phase of reopening. We must also remember however that for those who don’t swim well, a pool or a beach can pose a serious risk. No one should swim alone or without supervision.”

Six feet of separation will be required between groups of patrons at pools and beaches, and each group will be limited to ten individuals from a household or family unit. Masks should not be worn in the water, but distancing should be maintained there. On the pool deck or beach, masks must be worn if six feet of distance is not possible between one group and another. Patrons will be seeing increased availability and promotion of hand hygiene practices as well, either with the preferred method of soap and water, or with hand sanitizer.

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“It is important to remember that masks should not be worn while swimming,” Dr. Nesheiwat added. “However, the six-foot rule does apply in the water as well. So please, let’s respect everyone’s boundaries. That way we will all stay safe and keep this coronavirus from spreading. It is also not the time to relax from watching children around water. Drowning happens quickly. A child should never be left alone even for a moment near any water.”

The mission of the Putnam County Department of Health, nationally accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), is to improve and protect the health of the Putnam County community, composed of nearly 100,000 residents. Core services, provided directly and through collaboration, include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, emergency preparedness, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit our County website at www.putnamcountyny.com/coronavirus; or visit our social media sites @PutnamHealthNY on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

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