

**Mission:**

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



**Rick Scott**  
Governor

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State Surgeon General & Secretary

**Vision:** To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH REMINDS RESIDENTS OF THE DANGERS OF NAEGLERIA FOWLERI**

**TALLAHASSEE** - The Florida Department of Health cautions those who swim frequently in Florida's lakes, rivers and ponds during warm temperatures about the possible presence of *Naegleria fowleri*. Contact with this amoeba is rare, but the organism targets a person's brain and usually results in death. Adverse health effects on humans can be prevented by avoiding nasal contact with the waters, since the amoeba enters through the nasal passages.

Though there are only 34 reported cases in Florida since 1962, *Naegleria fowleri* can cause Primary Amebic Meningoencephalitis (PAM) disease which usually leads to death once infected. As a precaution, health officials recommend the following:

- Avoid water-related activities in bodies of warm freshwater, hot springs and thermally polluted water such as water around power plants.
- Avoid water-related activities in warm freshwater during periods of high water temperature and low water levels.
- Hold the nose shut or use nose clips when taking part in water-related activities in bodies of warm freshwater such as lakes, rivers, or hot springs.
- Avoid digging in or stirring up the sediment while taking part in water-related activities in shallow, warm freshwater areas.
- Please note exposure to the amoeba may also occur when using neti pots to rinse your sinuses of cold/allergy-related congestion or conducting religious rituals with tap water. Use only boiled and cooled, distilled, or sterile water for making sinus rinse solutions for neti pots or performing ritual ablutions.

If you experience any of these symptoms after swimming in any warm body of water, contact your health care provider immediately: headache, fever, nausea, disorientation, vomiting, stiff neck, seizures, loss of balance, or hallucinations. It is essential to seek medical attention right away, as PAM usually becomes fatal within five days of exposure.

Remember, this disease is rare and effective prevention strategies can allow for a safe and relaxing summer swim season.

For the latest information about the amoeba please visit the CDC's website at [www.cdc.gov/parasites/naegleria/general.html](http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/naegleria/general.html). To find out more about the use of neti pots, visit [www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm316375.htm](http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm316375.htm).

The Florida Department of Health works to protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county, & community efforts.

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