

# Health department says amoeba kills swimmer in Oklahoma lake

August 13 2015

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The State Department of Health says a swimmer has died after coming into contact with a rare amoeba in a southern Oklahoma lake.

Spokesman Tony Sellars says the department was notified early Wednesday that the adult swimmer died of Primary Amebic Meningoencephalitis (men-ingo-in-SEPHALITE-us) after visiting Lake Murray late last week. The lake is about 110 miles south of Oklahoma City.

The rare and usually [deadly disease](#) is caused by *Naegleria fowleri*, a single-cell organism that is naturally present in most lakes, ponds and rivers. The amoeba multiplies rapidly in very warm and stagnant water. When swimmers dive or submerge their heads in contaminated water, the amoeba travels up the nose to the brain, where it destroys tissue.

Seven cases of the disease have been recorded in Oklahoma since 1998.

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