

# Swim in unsanitary freshwater site in Florida leads to infection

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A swim in an unsanitary body of freshwater on private property in Broward County has resulted in a resident's hospitalization for a deadly infection caused by a brain-eating amoeba, health officials announced this week.

"(Florida health officials have) confirmed a local case of *Naegleria fowleri* in an individual from Broward County," said Mara Gambineri, a spokeswoman for the state Department of Health. "At this time, we believe that the individual contracted the [infection](#) after swimming in unsanitary water on a single private property."

The infected person's name, age and gender have not been disclosed nor has the location of the contaminated body of water.

"The individual is currently in the hospital receiving treatment," Gambineri said Thursday. "Health officials continue to investigate the location and are in the process of notifying persons with risk of exposure."

Florida is one of more than a dozen states to detect and document infections stemming from the heat-loving microscopic single-cell [amoeba](#) with a 97 percent mortality rate, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

An 11-year-old South Carolina girl died from the infection Aug. 5, just 12 days after exposure while swimming in the Edisto River in Charleston

County, The Associated Press reported.

And earlier this summer Ohio health officials confirmed that an 18-year-old resident of the state died from the infection June 19.

Only three people have survived the infection out of the 138 known cases in the United States from 1962 to 2015. Thirty-seven of those infections have been in the last decade, and more than half occurred in Florida and Texas, according to the CDC.

Aside from Broward exposure has been recorded in the following Florida counties: Baker, Brevard, Citrus, Hendry, Lee, Madison, Orange, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, Putnam, Palm Beach and Seminole.

In the summer of 2007, three boys, ages 10, 11 and 14, died from the amoeba in the Orlando area. Two years later, a 22-year-old man was infected after swimming.

Most prevalent during summer months, the amoeba naturally occur in warm freshwater lakes, ponds, rivers, hot springs and soil. It can also grow in pipes, water heaters and public drinking water systems, according to the CDC.

The amoeba are not found in salt water, and the infection cannot be spread from person to person or contracted by drinking contaminated water, health officials said.

Infection occurs when contaminated water is inhaled through the nose and rapidly progresses, usually causing death within three to 12 days. Some infections have been caused by people irrigating their sinuses with contaminated tap water.

The amoeba travels up the sinuses to the brain where it destroys tissue,

causes swelling and leads to death. Typical symptoms include headache, fever, vomiting and nausea and can progress to seizures, neck stiffness, hallucinations and confusion, according to the CDC.

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