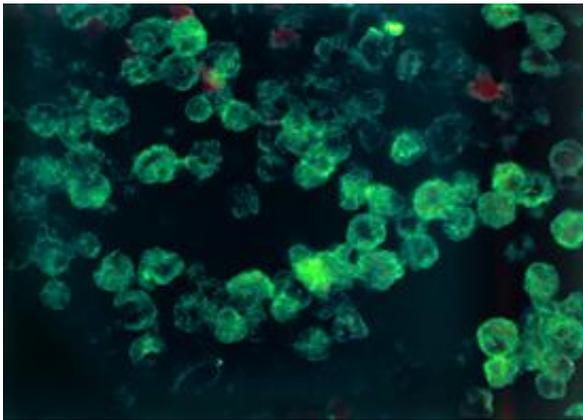


# Use sterile or boiled water for nasal washing abroad to avoid amoeba infection

January 27 2015

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Credit: CDC Public Health Image Library

The Norwegian Institute of Public Health has been informed that a woman from Oslo died in December 2014 after returning from Thailand where she had been infected with the *Naegleria fowleri* amoeba. The source of infection appears to be daily nasal washing with tap water. If you are unsure about the water quality, always use sterile or boiled water for nasal washing, particularly in subtropical and tropical areas.

## Travel advice

Always use sterile or boiled [water](#) for nasal washing abroad if you are uncertain of the [tap water](#) quality, particularly when travelling to subtropical and tropical countries. Only use bottled water if you are sure

it is distilled or sterile, unless the bottled water has been boiled.

## About *Naegleria fowleri*

*Naegleria fowleri* is a free-living amoeba that can attack the brain via the [nasal mucosa](#) and the olfactory nerve. It is also known as the "the brain-eating amoeba." The amoeba lives in freshwater and can reach the brain when [contaminated water](#) enters the nose.

The amoeba is usually transmitted when water enters the nose while swimming in lakes, rivers and unchlorinated swimming pools, but nasal washing with contaminated water is also a known risk factor.

Nasal washing is popular in yoga environments and is part of religious washing practices in many countries.

Symptoms appear within 1-7 days. The disease particularly affects young, healthy people causing severe meningoencephalitis, and it has a very high mortality. The disease is not transmitted by drinking contaminated water or spread by human to human contact. Boiling or chlorination of water kills the amoeba.

*Naegleria* infection is extremely rare, with just over 300 cases documented worldwide.

The amoeba thrives at high temperatures, especially between 25°C and 40°C and can survive for shorter periods at even higher temperatures.

Provided by Norwegian Institute of Public Health

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