

## Statewide News Release

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### Enjoy Memorial Day – Avoid Food, Water-related Illnesses

**FRANKFORT, Ky.** (May 28, 2010) – The Kentucky Department for Public Health’s (DPH) food safety branch is advising that all Kentuckians stick to the standard rules for food preparation and swimming safety this Memorial Day weekend.

“Participants in Memorial Day festivities need to be particularly mindful when engaging in activities, like grilling outdoors and swimming, associated with the holiday,” said DPH Commissioner William Hacker, M.D. “For food preparation and outdoor grilling, follow guidelines to prevent harmful bacteria from multiplying and causing foodborne illness. The same goes for the pool – take necessary steps to eliminate unhealthy conditions from the water.”

DPH recommends the following guidelines for food preparation:

- Wash your hands before and after handling food. Be sure all utensils and plates are clean.
- Use the refrigerator for thawing or thaw under cool running water. You may use the microwave for thawing, but grill immediately. Always marinate meats in the refrigerator.
- Use a meat thermometer to check for the following internal meat temperatures:

Poultry	165 degrees Fahrenheit
Red meat	160 degrees F
Pork	160 degrees F
Fish	160 degrees F
- Refrigerate meat and poultry until ready for use. After cooking meat and poultry on the grill, keep it at 135 degrees F or warmer.
- Refrigerate any leftovers promptly in shallow containers.

To avoid illness related to swimming or exposure to water (known as recreational water illnesses or RWIs), DPH advises that swimmers visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s website at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming>. RWIs can be a wide variety infections, including gastrointestinal, skin, ear, respiratory, eye, neurologic, and wound infections. The most commonly reported RWI is diarrhea. Diarrheal illnesses can be caused by germs such as Crypto (short for *Cryptosporidium*), *Giardia*, *Shigella*, [norovirus](#) and [E. coli O157:H7](#).

Also remember to:

- Check residential pool water yourself using test strips purchased at your local hardware or pool supply store.
- Ask the pool operator about chlorine and other chemical levels and request information on the latest pool inspection score.
- Encourage pool operators to take steps shown to kill the germs that cause RWIs.

Educate other swimmers about RWIs to promote healthy swimming. In addition, swimmers are advised not to swallow pool water or swim when you have diarrhea and to practice good hygiene, including showering with soap before swimming and washing hands after using the toilet or changing diapers. Parents of young children should take them on bathroom breaks or check diapers often. Diapers should be changed in a bathroom or a diaper-changing area and not at poolside. Children should be washed thoroughly with soap and water before swimming.

The Department of Public Health has also partnered with the Office of the Attorney General to help ensure that swimming pools and spas are safe for Kentucky children.

“Our offices have been working together to enforce a federal law known as the Virginia Graeme Baker Act. This law, which requires specific drain covers for public swimming pools and hot tubs, is playing a key role in improving swimming safety in Kentucky,” said Attorney General Jack Conway.

The drain covers stop children from becoming trapped by a drain. Public Health and the Office of the Attorney General are working together to bring all pools in Kentucky into compliance with the law. For further information, please contact your local health department’s environmental health professionals, or the department’s food safety branch at (502) 564-7181, or environmental management branch at (502) 564-4856.