



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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ADPH continues investigation of E coli associated with the SportsPlex and Aquatic Center in Opelika

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health continues its investigation of an E. coli O157:H7 outbreak in Lee County. Thirteen children and two adults who either played in the Splash Park or swam in the pool at the Opelika SportsPlex and Aquatic Center between June 4 and June 22 were identified with severe gastrointestinal illness. Five children have been confirmed positive for E. coli O157:H7 infection.

Four children were initially hospitalized and two remain hospitalized.

The Health Department has contacted the parents of children of seven day care centers that had children at the Splash Park during the period of concern. Symptoms of E. coli can appear up until 10 days after exposure.

“Based on the information that we have now, it appears that the common source of exposure was the Aquatic Center,” said State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson. “Because of the risk for outbreak of illness, it is essential that public pools and water parks follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines for adequate chlorine and pH levels.”

Illnesses in recreational waters are caused by germs spread by swallowing, breathing in mists or aerosols or having contact with contaminated water in swimming pools, water parks, hot tubs, interactive fountains, water play areas, lakes, rivers or oceans. Infection may also occur by touching the environment in petting zoos and other animal exhibits or by eating food prepared by people who did not wash their hands well after using the toilet.

ADPH notified city officials of possible contamination on June 20. ADPH collected water samples for testing from the facilities at the Aquatic Center. The ADPH Bureau of Clinical Laboratories ran the initial tests which were negative for bacteria. Negative results do not guarantee that bacteria was not present. Additional water samples have been collected and sent to the CDC for testing and results are pending.

Parents have been asked to be alert for symptoms of illness. If a child has nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or abdominal cramps parents should seek medical attention for their child. People with diarrhea caused by potential waterborne pathogens should not use recreational water venues such as swimming pools, water slides and water parks for two weeks after symptoms resolve.

Following CDC guidelines, the City of Opelika has treated all facilities at the Splash Park and Aquatic Center, and the facilities are open.

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