



***Naegleria* Infection** (nuh-GLEER-e-uh)

What is *Naegleria*?

Naegleria is a free-living amoeba commonly found in the environment in water and soil. Only one species of *Naegleria* has been found to infect humans, *Naegleria fowleri*.

Where is *Naegleria* found?

Naegleria fowleri is found worldwide. Most commonly, the amoeba is found in:

- Warm bodies of fresh water, such as lakes and rivers
- Geothermal water such as hot springs
- Warm water discharge from industrial plants
- Minimally chlorinated swimming pools
- Soil

How common is *Naegleria* infection?

Although *Naegleria* is commonly found in the environment, infection occurs rarely. Only 23 infections were documented in the U.S. between 1995 and 2004.

When is *Naegleria* most common?

Infection with *Naegleria* is most common during the dry, summer months, when the air temperature is above 80° F, the water is warm, and water levels are low. The number of infections increase during years characterized by heat waves.

How does infection with *Naegleria* occur?

Infection with *Naegleria* occurs when the amoeba enters the body through the nose. Generally this occurs when people are participating in water-related activities such as swimming underwater, diving, or other water sports that result in water going up the nose. The amoeba then travels to the brain and spinal cord where it destroys the brain tissue.

What are the signs and symptoms of *Naegleria* infection?

Infection with *Naegleria* causes the disease primary amoebic meningoencephalitis (PAM), a brain inflammation, which leads to the destruction of brain tissue.

Initial signs and symptoms of PAM start 1 to 14 days after infection. These symptoms include headache, fever, nausea, vomiting, and stiff neck. As the amoebae cause more extensive destruction of brain tissue this leads to confusion, lack of attention to people and

