

# Health Officials Investigate Amebic Infection

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**RALEIGH, N.C.** – Mecklenburg County and North Carolina state health officials received notification from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that the June 19 death of an Ohio resident who recently visited North Carolina is suspected to be from an ameba that is naturally present in warm lakes during the summer.

The suspected cause of death was attributed to Primary Amebic Meningoencephalitis, an infection caused by *Naegleria fowleri*, a one-celled organism that does not cause illness if swallowed, but can be fatal if forced up the nose. The deceased's only known underwater exposure was believed to be when riding in a raft with several others that overturned at the U.S. National Whitewater Center in Charlotte.

*Naegleria fowleri* infections are rare. According to the CDC, fewer than 10 cases have been reported annually in the United State during the last 53 years. This ameba can cause severe illness up to nine days after exposure. A person cannot be infected with *Naegleria fowleri* by drinking contaminated water and the ameba is not found in salt water.

The Mecklenburg County Health Department, CDC, Ohio Department of Public Health, Franklin County (Ohio) Public Health Department, the U.S. National Whitewater Center and the North Carolina Division of Public Health are collaborating with further investigation.

Mecklenburg County Health Director Marcus Plescia, MD, and State Health Director Randall Williams, MD, offer their condolences and prayers to the family.

In warmer areas where this infection has been more common, recommended precautions include:

- Limit the amount of water going up your nose. Hold your nose shut, use nose clips, or keep your head above water when taking part in warm freshwater-related activities.
- Avoid water-related activities in warm fresh water during periods of high water temperature and low water levels.
- Avoid digging in, or stirring up, the sediment while taking part in water-related activities in shallow, warm fresh water areas.

For more information Primary Amebic Meningoencephalitis visit

<http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/naegleria/>

