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**Case of Primary Amebic Meningoencephalitis (PAM) Reported**

**Health Officials Stress Caution When Swimming in Natural Bodies of Water**

The Oklahoma State Department of Health announced today that a Carter County adult has died due to Primary Amebic Meningoencephalitis (PAM) after recently swimming in Lake Murray.

PAM is an extremely rare and usually deadly disease caused by infection with a single-celled organism (ameba), *Naegleria fowleri*. These disease-causing organisms are naturally present in most lakes, ponds, and rivers but multiply rapidly in very warm and stagnant water. Persons may be exposed to *Naegleria fowleri* ameba when they dive or submerge their head in contaminated water. The ameba then travels up the nose to the brain where it destroys the brain tissue.

Symptoms of PAM initially include: high fever, headache, nausea, and vomiting. Later, symptoms may include stiff neck, seizures, hallucinations, and coma. PAM cannot be spread from person-to-person. Most occurrences of PAM occur in the southern states. Since 1998, seven cases due to PAM have occurred among Oklahomans.

This tragic death emphasizes the importance of safe swimming behaviors, especially later in the summer as the water temperatures increase. Health officials encourage Oklahomans to observe these water safety tips to avoid illness while swimming in lakes, rivers and other natural bodies of water:

* Avoid forcing water up the nose when swimming, playing, jumping, diving, or dunking your head into bodies of fresh water, such as lakes and ponds. This is especially important for water that is near shore, shallow, and warm.
* Hold your nose or use nose plugs when jumping or diving into water.
* Never swim in stagnant water, water that is cloudy and green, water that has mats of algae, or water that has a foul odor.
* Do not swim in areas posted as "No Swimming".
* Avoid swallowing water from rivers, lakes, streams, or stock ponds.
* Swimming in properly maintained pools prevents PAM because chlorine rapidly kills the ameba.

For more information, visit:

[http://www.ok.gov/health/Disease,\_Prevention,\_Preparedness/Acute\_Disease\_Service/Disease\_Information/Primary\_Amebic\_Meningoencephalitis.html](http://www.ok.gov/health/Disease%2C_Prevention%2C_Preparedness/Acute_Disease_Service/Disease_Information/Primary_Amebic_Meningoencephalitis.html).

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