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KNOW THE RISKS: PREVENTION OF THE RARE BRAIN-EATING AMOEBIA

WACO, Texas (June 6, 2023) – As the temperature rises, many people are eager to hit the water and cool off. But before you dive in, remember to take safety precautions against a deadly but uncommon water amoeba.

No amount of swimming experience can protect the ones you love from the amoeba *Naegleria fowleri*, also known as the “brain-eating amoeba.” Instead, a few simple safety precautions can ensure this rare disease stays another statistic and not a personal experience.

Primary amebic meningoencephalitis, or PAM, is a rare brain infection caused by *Naegleria fowleri* when water containing the amoeba is forced into a person’s nasal passages through activities such as swimming, jumping into the water or water skiing.

So why the summer warning? Well, *Naegleria fowleri* thrives in freshwater warmer than 80 degrees, and Texas’ summers are sure to heat up the water we love to cool down in.

Assume the amoeba, which is too small to be seen without a microscope, is in the water as it’s very common in freshwater environment, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The infection can’t spread from person to person or by drinking contaminated water. The only way to completely prevent contracting PAM is to not participate in water-related activities that could force water up the nasal passage, including swimming in a lake, the Brazos River, or a stream.

But if you do decide to participate, use nose clips or hold your nose shut while jumping into the water or always keep your head above water.

The amoeba also is found in soil, so avoid stirring up underwater sediment.

Seek immediate medical attention with the development of a headache, fever, nausea, or vomiting after swimming in freshwater, according to the CDC. PAM symptoms begin showing one-to-12 days after infection. Later symptoms can include a stiff neck, confusion, seizures, hallucinations, and coma. Two-to-three infections are reported each year in the U.S., and there have only been four U.S. survivors, according to the CDC.

Enjoy the Brazos River basin and keep making great memories with your loved ones as you make safety precautions a part of the adventure.

For more information about PAM, contact your local county health department or the Texas Department of State Health Services at 512-776-7111 or 1-888-963-7111.

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About the Brazos River Authority

The Brazos River Authority, with headquarters in Waco, is the oldest river authority in Texas. Created by the Texas Legislature in 1929, the Authority’s 42,000 square-mile territory includes all or part of 70 counties; extending from the Texas-New Mexico border west of Lubbock to the Gulf of Mexico near Freeport.

The BRA built, owns, and operates three reservoirs (Lakes Possum Kingdom, Granbury, and Limestone). In addition to these water supply reservoirs, the BRA contracts with the Corps of Engineers for the water supply storage space at eight federal multi-purpose flood control and water conservation reservoirs (Lakes Whitney, Belton, Proctor, Somerville, Stillhouse Hollow, Granger, Georgetown and Aquilla).

The Brazos River Authority operates a regional wastewater system for the cities of Temple-Belton. The BRA also operates wastewater treatment plants for the cities of Clute-Richwood, Sugar Land, and Hutto. The BRA owns and operates a potable water treatment system, the East Williamson County Regional Water System, for the City of Taylor.

The BRA engages in water quality monitoring activities throughout the Brazos River basin. As a member of the Texas Clean River Program, the BRA samples and tests water from more than 100 locations throughout the basin on either a monthly, quarterly or annual basis. For further information on the Brazos River Authority, please contact Judi Pierce, Public Information Officer at 254-761-3103.