

7/13/10

What lurks in murky flood waters, could be hazardous to your health

Posted: Jul 13, 2010 11:20 AM CDT

Updated: Jul 14, 2010 5:39 AM CDT

By Tiffany Pelt - [email](#)

LUBBOCK, TX (KCBD) – While children enjoy playing in the rain and flood water, it might not be all fun and games. Water covering streets, neighborhood lawns, and fields, runoff into the flooding water potentially creating a cesspool of bacteria and chemicals your child may be playing in.

"It's a legitimate question to ask, are there significant amount of chemicals, oil, pesticides or are there bacteria and other pathogens that may enter this water particularly the playa lakes, and especially if children are playing in it," said Dr. Ron Kendall, Director of Environmental and Human Health Institute at Texas Tech.

To find out what exactly is lurking in all that water, KCBD took water samples at six different flooded areas around town to experts so they could see what we couldn't.

Dr. Kendall's institute tested the samples for chemicals and organic contaminants, strands of Ecoli that makes people sick, and amoeba, the kind that can kill.

Deadly amoeba can lie dormant in the soil until stirred up by things like flood water or kids splashing around. "U.S. totals since 1937 there's been 121 cases and of all those cases survival rate was only 5 people so that's about 3%. So it's a serious issue," said Kristyn Urban, Texas Tech grad student.

The samples incubated for several days, giving some good news, some bad, and some just plain disgusting.

No Ecoli was found but there were other bacteria. "From Mackenzie Park just kind of a fun demonstration, I grew it up on a nutrient agar meaning any bacteria is going to grow on it," said Anna ??, Texas Tech grad student. So many bacteria grew on that sample it turned the whole thing yellow making it impossible to distinguish between the different kinds. After seeing that, Anna said she wouldn't be playing in the water. "I probably would not, no. If nothing else it has a funny smell," she said.

As for the amoeba, there was a 22-year-old man back in 2007 that died from an amoeba. He contracted at Lake LBJ in central Texas, luckily there were no traces of it here in Lubbock.

For the other tests, they found compounds used in soap and cosmetics. Some traces of organic arsenic, but not enough to hurt you. They also found some other compounds. "A methyl indole compound so this is also a naturally occurring chemical that is in flowers like jasmine, but it's also a product of mammalian feces so dog poop or cat poop," said Todd Anderson, Texas Tech environmental toxicology professor.

But it probably wasn't just from pets. We found a porter potty knocked over in the water, with people playing nearby.

Even though they found small traces of these things, these chemicals and bacteria do have the potential to be harmful. "They tend to be more hazardous from a more chronic exposure. So long term exposure to low levels of these things would be more hazardous," said Anderson.

These samples are not perfect, and there could be other things out there, but hopefully this will make you think twice before diving into the unknown.

Copyright 2010 KCBD. All rights reserved.





All content © Copyright 2000 - 2010 WorldNow and KCBD, a [Raycom Media Station](#).
All Rights Reserved. For more information on this site, please read our [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#).