

# Council update

## Suspected *Naegleria fowleri* at Murweh Shire Council

### What has happened?

*Naegleria fowleri* was detected in samples of water that Queensland Health considers to be representative of the incoming supply at health facilities in Charleville and Augathella.

### What is *Naegleria fowleri*?

*Naegleria fowleri* is an amoeba that occurs in warm, fresh water in many parts of Australia. It can also be found in soil.

### What are the next steps?

The next step is to check if *Naegleria fowleri* is present in the broader water distribution system at Charleville and Augathella. Council is working with the Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers and Queensland Health on the development of a plan if *Naegleria* is detected. Test results are expected by early September 2025.

### Why was the public health alert raised?

Out of an abundance of caution, Queensland Health recommended that Council provide the public with information on simple things they can do to keep their families safe.

*Naegleria fowleri* may infect people when water containing it enters the nose under pressure. It then travels into the brain and causes a disease called primary amoebic meningoencephalitis (also known as PAM). PAM is very rare but is usually fatal.

### What is the public health advice?

- The water remains safe to drink.
- Do not let water to go up the nose when bathing, showering, washing the face, using hoses or using sprinklers.
- Supervise or teach children not to let water up their nose when they are bathing, showering, washing their face, and when they are around hoses and sprinklers.
- Don't put your head under water when bathing or swimming in pools filled with town water that has not been adequately chlorinated.

- Avoid slip-n-slides and other activities where it is difficult to prevent water from going up the nose accidentally.
- Avoid using unboiled water for any form of nasal irrigation or nasal lavage; and
- Do not use the water in medical devices such as CPAP machines; if the manufacturer's instructions allow the use of tap water then use cooled, boiled water.

### Can I use the water in a humidifier or vapouriser?

Yes. There is no evidence that *Naegleria fowleri* can spread through water vapour or aerosol droplets such as shower mist or vapour from a humidifier.

### Is the water safe for use in a caravan?

The water remains safe to drink. If *Naegleria* is in the town water supply there is the possibility of the amoeba getting into a caravan's water system, including pipes and storage tanks. Conditions that support *Naegleria* growth include water stagnation, high water temperatures and poor maintenance of the caravan's water system. Regular maintenance such as cleaning and chlorine disinfection of the caravans' water system are effective measures to manage any presence of *Naegleria*.

### Are school water fountains safe to use?

The water at your school is safe for children to drink but they should be discouraged from squirting water from taps and bubblers. If you are concerned for your child using a drinking water fountain, the use of a drink bottle filled with tap water is a safe alternative option.

### What do I do if I have more questions?

For further information on *Naegleria fowleri*, please refer to the Queensland Health webpage [Naegleria fowleri | Health and wellbeing | Queensland Government](#).

If you have health concerns, you can contact the Darling Downs Public Health Unit on (07) 4699 8240 or call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84).

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