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Be aware

Participation in muddy obstacle adventure course runs/races (also called 'Mud Runs' or 'Adventure Races') has surged in popularity in Ireland and elsewhere. A number of outbreaks of infectious disease associated with such events have been reported internationally¹⁻⁴. An outbreak was reported in 2015 in Cork, and there have been anecdotal reports of other outbreaks in Ireland.

It is crucial that participants and organisers are aware of the potential for exposure to certain infectious diseases.

Why might there be a risk of sickness?

Mud Run type races often take place on farmland. Participants can come in contact with animal manure (faeces, poop) and urine with the risk of picking up a zoonotic infection (an infection which can be passed from animals to humans). Such infections include *E. coli* infection (VTEC is the most serious type), campylobacteriosis, leptospirosis or listeriosis. Alternatively, a participant may have an infection such as norovirus ('winter-vomiting') which could spread from person-to-person if mud or water became contaminated with the germ.

Swallowing or skin contact

Swallowing contaminated water or mud during the event would be the main risk for picking up germs such as *E. coli*, *Campylobacter* or Norovirus. Infection from germs causing leptospirosis or listeriosis could result from swallowing the contaminated water/mud or from skin contact (especially through broken skin) with it.

Small amounts of contaminated water or mud may not cause any difficulty. However, some participants might swallow sufficient numbers of germs to cause infection.

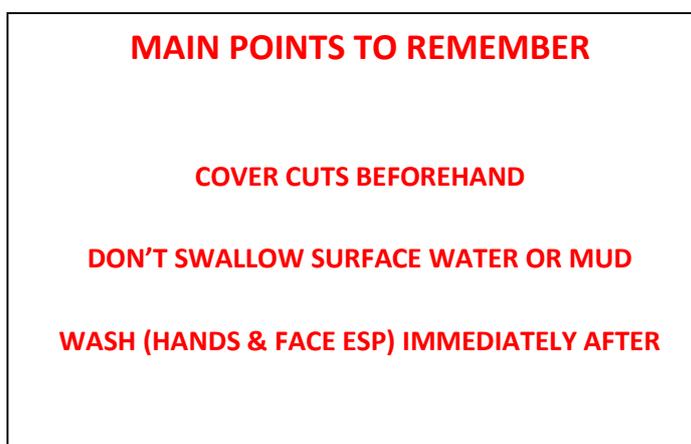
Remember, water does not have to look muddy to be contaminated.

Symptoms

Symptoms, which could develop within hours or days, would depend on the particular germ causing the infection. Gastroenteritis symptoms (diarrhoea and/or vomiting, tummy cramps, fever) would be the most likely symptoms. Other symptoms might include headaches, skin rashes, unusual tiredness/lack of energy or possibly jaundice.

Public Health Advice

- Stay out of the event if you have vomiting or diarrhoea.
- Cover any cuts or abrasions with a waterproof plaster/bandage.
- Avoid swallowing any surface water or mud.
- Wash hands and face with soap and water immediately after finishing, and especially before eating or drinking.
- Shower as soon as possible after the event.
- Seek medical advice if you are worried about any symptoms afterwards, mentioning your participation in a mud run (for certain infections, symptoms might not start for a few weeks).



Further Information

Health Protection Surveillance Centre www.hpsc.ie

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC-US): Adventure Races
<http://www.cdc.gov/features/adventure-racing/>

REFERENCES

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4. Stern EJ *et al.* Outbreak of leptospirosis among Adventure Race participants in Florida, 2005. *Clin Infect Dis.* 2010 Mar 15;50(6):843-9. <http://cid.oxfordjournals.org/content/50/6/843.long>