

Be careful of water you drink

It is a nice and warm summer's day, and you are up in the high country on a hike. You come across a beautiful, fast-flowing, mountain stream. The kind you see in the commercials on television. What could be better than a drink from this cold-water stream?

Well, you better hit your water bottle instead, because what is in that stream could make you sick. It probably won't kill you, but you may wish you were dead.

The water may contain a microscopic protozoan called giardia lamblia. If ingested, you may come down with giardiasis, sometimes known as backpacker's fever. It comes from drinking untreated water.

Giardiasis is not limited to remote waters. It is the most common parasitic disease in the United States. It is a worldwide concern. So many tourists have returned from the Soviet Union with giardiasis, that another name for the disease is the Trotsky's.

The parasite, or trophozoite is so small that about 8,000 of them can fit on the head of a pin. They are taken into the host with food or drink. The most common way to

catch it is through drinking water.

Swimming in infected water also will expose you to the disease. You can catch it from petting your dog after it goes for a swim. Touch food from unwashed hands and you are exposed. The organism enters the water from the feces of an infected animal. Just about any mammal can carry the disease. It can even be transmitted sexually.

The results of this disease include such symptoms as painful illness, weakness, diarrhea, dehydration, cramps, nausea, fever and flatulence. Some people experience a limited infection that goes away after a few days, while others struggle through a prolonged illness that can come and go for years.

For example, if you have unexplained, periodic recurrence of diarrhea, you could be a victim of giardiasis. Even if you have been cured of the disease once, you can catch it again. Fortunately, you can expect a complete cure but it requires antibiotics from your doctor and it can be tricky to diagnose.

The best cure for giardiasis is to prevent it in the first place. Avoid drinking water in the



That beautiful mountain lake or stream can look pretty inviting when you are hot and thirsty, but you may want to consider what is swimming around in those waters that you cannot see. Best to play it safe and drink from your water bottle instead. (Photo courtesy of Pete Kowalski)

wild at all is the best. If possible, bring your water supply with you from home or bottled water from the store.

If you must drink water from the wilderness there are a few points to remember. Treatment with chemicals is not very reliable. Chlorine and iodine, two of the most common of water purifiers, are not 100 percent effective on giardia cysts. Chlorine and iodine have other dangerous drawbacks to consider as well as both

can be lethal on their own.

Boiling water will kill the disease. A rolling boil will knock out giardia cysts and other bacteria, but boiling is not always an option. Besides, boiling water is not always convenient.

For most folks the answer is a pocket water filter. Be certain to select one that has a maximum pore size of 0.2 microns. With this size filter, all particles and pathogens larger than this will be prevented from passing

through the filter. This will also stop bacteria and many viruses.

We are fortunate here in Colorado, as our state requires the filtration as well as chemical disinfection of all public water supplies that rely on surface water. Those folks that get their water from a well should not become over confident. Giardia has been found in wells, springs and cisterns.

So, next time you are out and about in the high country, and you

come upon that inviting clear mountain stream, it would be best to crack open the water bottle instead.

Until next time, see you on the trail. I will be the guy by the creek with a water bottle from home.

Mark Rackay is a freelance writer who serves as a director for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the Posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org.

Axel Project Classic bicycle event Sept. 5

2nd year for Dallas Divide ride, Ridgway festival

The second annual Axel Project Bicycle Classic is coming up, so if you've ever wanted to ride over Dallas Divide on a road bike, or you just want to ride bikes with your kids, plan on spending the day in Ridgway on Sept. 5.

I did the ride last year with Lynn Whipple and my older daughter, Paige, while my younger daughter, Abby, stayed back at the Town Park and participated in the kids activities. There was great music, food, kids rides and a wonderful day full of everything bicycles.

This year, we're all going to do the ride, and Abby's goal is to make it to Dallas Divide and back to Ridgway. She is 11 and the long grade to the top of Dallas Divide will be a challenge for her, but she knows she has the reward of a long

descent back into town to enjoy.

Plus, all funds raised during the event will go toward the Axel Project, a local non-profit organization with the mission to introduce and nurture a lifelong passion for cycling to children and their families.

Axel Charette was the 2-year-old son of Jen and Randy Charette, who was killed in Sayulita, Mexico, in February 2013.

The Charettes are residents of Ridgway and they had formerly owned a bike shop there. Axel loved to ride a Strider bike, a small bike without pedals that a child can use to zip around and enjoy the freedom of two wheels at a young age.

To honor the memory of Axel, the Charettes started the Axel Project to expose kids and families to bicycles to help

build healthier communities and a better world.

Jen and Randy believe that "biking not only builds confidence in young children but also improves health, is an outlet to express pure joy, is a foundation to a lifelong appreciation of nature, and helps strengthen family bonds because it is an activity the entire family can do together."

The Charettes travel to events to set up mini race courses for kids to try Strider bikes.

They also focus on giving away bikes to schools and day-care centers as part of their RideTime program, which is discussed on their website www.axelproject.com.

They work with teachers to set aside time during and after school to ride bikes and be active. They also provide schools with curriculum so activities and learning are fun. Teachers can contact them for more information.

The Axel Project has put more than 5,000 kids



The Axel Project has put more than 5,000 kids on bikes at Axel Project events and provided 200 bikes to kids around the country. It has also supplied bikes to schools, recreation districts, BMX tracks, and daycare centers. An event Sept. 5 will include a fully supported ride from Ridgway to Telluride for road cyclists, and easier rides for families with younger kids. (Courtesy photo)

on bikes at Axel Project Events and provided 200 bikes to kids around the country. It has also supplied bikes to schools, recreation districts, BMX tracks, and daycare centers.

The upcoming Axel Project Bicycle Classic includes fully supported rides for the road cyclist as well as easier rides for families with younger kids. The road rides start at the Ridgway Town Park and go over Dallas Divide (elevation 8,983 feet) west of town on Colorado 62.

The first-aid station is on Dallas Divide and the

second is in Placerville at mile 24. The aid stations are well-stocked and staffed to assist the riders. Jen Charette told me that the aid stations even have a Belgian waffle bar. Cascade Bicycles and Alpine Cycle Connection will be supplying the mechanical support.

If you turn around in Placerville, be prepared for a 13-mile climb back up Dallas Divide and a fast descent into Ridgway for a total of 48 miles. If you want a longer ride (80 miles) and about 5,000 feet of climbing, continue up

to Telluride on Colorado 145 to aid station No. 3.

These rides are incredibly scenic with great support, a beautiful jersey and a fantastic cause.

For families with younger kids, there are activities in the Ridgway Town Park all afternoon and a group ride with three options at 10 a.m.

Families and kids will ride north on the bike path from the park along the Uncompahgre River for a scavenger hunt. Younger kids will ride to the Eagle statue in Weaver Park, mountain

See CLASSIC, page A12

SUMMER CLEARANCE GETS BETTER

SAVE 30% OFF

Select Summer Sportswear
New Brands Added To Summer Clearance

Excludes clearance merchandise.

10 SOUTH SELIG AVE **MONTROSE, COLORADO 81401** **970-249-4226**