# Cryptosporidium Outbreaks in Paignton and Beckenham Raise Concerns Over Water Safety



On May 17, 2024, residents of Paignton, Devon collected bottled water at Broadsands Car Park following a cryptosporidium outbreak that led South West Water to advise boiling tap water before drinking. The contamination affected over 17,000 households and businesses in the Brixham area, with more than 100 reported cases of symptoms such as diarrhoea and vomiting.

In a related incident, residents in Beckenham, south-east London, reported similar symptoms, prompting Thames Water to test local water supplies. Despite initial concerns, Thames Water stated that laboratory results showed no issues with the water quality.

Katie Cox, a TV producer in Beckenham, and other residents expressed fears that their illnesses might be linked to the water distribution. Thames Water assured that no aesthetic issues were found during on-site testing, and reiterated that their water meets high safety standards.

In Devon, South West Water maintained that it would not lift the boil water notice until further testing confirmed safe drinking conditions. The outbreak, initially reported safe, was later detected in treated water, necessitating continuous monitoring and distribution of bottled water.

The cryptosporidium parasite, often found in the intestines and feces of infected individuals and animals, can cause cryptosporidiosis, which presents as fever, loss of appetite, and gastrointestinal distress. The condition, while generally self-limiting within a month, has severely impacted local residents.