

POOLS SAFE

RECREATIONAL WATER ILLNESS



Did you know that swimmers are the main source of contamination in a pool? When you go swimming, you share the water—and the germs in it—with every other person who enters the pool. That's why all swimmers need to take an active role in preventing the spread of germs and keeping yourself and your loved ones healthy every time you swim. When germs or chemicals in a pool make someone sick, it's called a recreational water illness (RWI).

Swallowing, having contact with, or breathing in the mist of contaminated water can cause an RWI. RWIs cause a variety of infections, including those that affect the stomach, skin, ear, lungs and eyes. The most commonly reported RWI is diarrhea.

Swallowing water that is contaminated with germ-containing poop can cause diarrhea. On average, people have about 0.14 grams of poop on their bottoms, which gets rinsed off in the pool. When someone is ill with diarrhea, their poop can contain millions of germs. This means that just one person with diarrhea can easily contaminate the water in a large pool or water park.

Other RWIs are caused by germs that live in nature (e.g., water and dirt). If chlorine levels in pools or hot tubs are not maintained at the right levels, these germs can multiply and cause illness.

Here are the germs and gunk the average swimmer can bring into the pool:



Now think about how much of that same water you swallow in 45 minutes of swimming:



Do your part to prevent RWIs by taking these four steps:

- Stay out of the water if you are ill or have been ill with diarrhea in the last two weeks
- Shower with soap before you get into the pool
- Use the bathroom, don't pee or poop in the pool
- Don't swallow pool water

Five Common POOL Myths

Myth #1: A strong chlorine smell means lots of chlorine in the pool.

Fact: Just the opposite. It's not the chlorine you smell. When chlorine mixes with contaminants like sweat, body oil, and pee, new chemicals are formed. These chemicals smell and can cause your eyes to get red and sting, make your nose run and make you cough. Contaminants use up the chlorine so it's not able to kill germs. The pool could also become cloudy. Healthy pools are clear and they don't have a strong chlorine smell. Don't swim in cloudy or strong-smelling pools.

Myth #2: Chlorine kills germs in a pool right away.

Fact: It takes chlorine minutes, hours and sometimes even days to kill the toughest germs that can make people sick. Even well-maintained pools can still have germs. Don't swallow pool water.

Myth #3: I showered this morning. I don't need to shower before getting into the pool.

Fact: Swimmers are the main source of pool contamination. When a swimmer doesn't shower before getting into the pool, contaminants like sweat, dirt, pee, poop, body oil, lotion and sunscreen rinse off into the pool water. This uses up chlorine so it's not able to kill germs. One germ can multiply into 20 million in as little as eight hours. Shower with soap before getting into the pool. Even showering for just one minute removes most of the contaminants that use up chlorine.

Myth #4: If my child isn't potty trained, I can put them in a swim diaper for the day.

Fact: Swim diapers and swim pants do NOT stop germs or diarrhea from getting into the water. They are not leak proof (think tea bag). Take kids on bathroom breaks every 30 – 60 minutes and check/change diapers at a diaper changing station and away from poolside.



Myth #5: If I was sick with diarrhea yesterday but feel better today, I'm not contagious and can swim.

Fact: Most illness outbreaks from recreational water (pools, water parks, lakes, etc.) are outbreaks of diarrhea. They are caused by germs that can spread when someone who is sick has diarrhea in the water and other people swallow the germ water. Some germs make people contagious for days or weeks after they feel better. Children, the elderly and people with weakened immune systems are at the highest risk of getting sick. Don't swim if you are sick or have been sick with diarrhea within the last two weeks. Don't swallow pool water.

**Swimmers, do your part to prevent RWIs,
keep your germs to yourself!**

For more information:

Pool Safe campaign www.srhd.org/poolsafe.asp

CDC www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming

