



What You *Think* You Know and What You *Should* Know About Healthy Pools

MYTH

FACT

- * *I can't get sick from swimming in a pool.* → * Swimming is a fun and healthy activity. However, swallowing, breathing, or having contact with contaminated water from swimming pools can spread illnesses. In fact, the number of outbreaks associated with swimming has increased over the past decade.
- * *Clear pool water means clean pool water.* → * Microorganisms can be present even in pools that appear clean. What you smell, feel, and hear can help you sense whether you're swimming in a healthy pool.
- * *All germs that can cause illness are immediately killed by standard pool cleaning chemicals, such as chlorine.* → * Chlorine kills germs that can cause illness in pool water; but it takes time. While chlorine eliminates most within minutes, some germs such as *Cryptosporidium* can survive in a properly treated pool for days.
- * *When I smell the strong odor of pool chemicals, it means the swimming pool water is very clean.* → * The heavy chemical odor is not from chlorine. It means that unhealthy *chloramines* have formed in the water, created from the mix of chlorine and contaminants. Chloramines are not as effective in disinfecting swimming pool water. A well-maintained pool has little odor.
- * *When I get red eyes while swimming, it means there is too much chlorine in the water.* → * Red eyes and itchy skin are usually caused by improper pH or high chloramine levels. Surprisingly, the pool may actually need additional chlorine treatment to get rid of chloramines and sanitize the water.
- * *I only need to shower before going into the pool if I haven't bathed that day.* → * All swimmers should shower before entering the pool. Perspiration, body oil, urine, and other waste are with us at all times. Without showering, it all comes with us when we go swimming.
- * *As long as a child is wearing a diaper in the pool, there's no chance for a contamination of the water.* → * "Accidents" from diapered children pose a risk of contamination. To minimize this risk, parents must wash children thoroughly, front and back, with soap and water, and make sure a clean, form-fitting "swim diaper" is worn by the child at all times. Just remember that swim diapers are not leak proof.
- * *Keeping a swimming pool clean and healthy is the lifeguard's and pool manager's responsibility.* → * Employees help keep pools clean, but they cannot be your only defense. Each one of us has a responsibility to follow good public health practices, stay alert for unhealthy conditions, and report problems when they occur.