
Swimming - keeping the water clean

Summary

- Do not swim if you have had diarrhoea in the past 14 days.
 - Shower and wash thoroughly with soap before swimming, especially your bottom.
 - Wash your hands thoroughly with soap after using the toilet or changing nappies.
 - Inform the lifeguard if you believe the pool water may have become contaminated.
 - Inform the pool operator if you become ill after swimming in the pool.
 - Avoid swallowing water while swimming.
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Swimming is a popular low impact activity that is great for improving general health and wellbeing. However, swimmers have a responsibility to keep themselves and others safe and healthy.

Even in treated public pools where chlorine is able to kill most germs, chlorine cannot act straight away. Some germs, such as cryptosporidium, can live in pool water for days after being introduced, and can still make you sick. It is important to do everything you can to keep the water clean.

Contaminating pool water

Germs on your body can wash off and contaminate the water. You are more likely to be infectious when you are not feeling well yourself. Showering with soap before swimming will help keep contaminants out of the water.

Stay out of the pool if you have an infection

If you have an infection, stay out of the water. Even when you are recovering, stay out of the water until the infection has passed. Timeframes for some common infections include:

- **chickenpox** – after the first sign of a rash, avoid swimming for seven days
- **gastroenteritis (gastro)** – do not swim for 14 days after recovering
- **Tinea corporis (athlete's foot)** – do not swim until one day after commencing treatment.

Consult with your doctor for more specific advice.

Tips for keeping the water clean

By following these simple steps you can make sure you help to keep pools clean and safe for everyone to swim in.

Tips for swimmers:

- Do not swim if you have had diarrhoea in the past 14 days.
- Shower and wash thoroughly (especially your bottom) before you swim.
- Wash your hands thoroughly after going to the toilet.
- Avoid swallowing water while swimming.
- Inform the pool operator if you become ill after swimming in the pool.

Tips for parents:

- Keep an eye on your children at all times, and inform the lifeguard if you believe the pool water has become contaminated.
- Take children on frequent toilet breaks, at least every hour. Check nappies every 30 to 60 minutes.
- Change nappies in nappy-changing areas. Do not change nappies by the poolside.
- Wash your hands thoroughly after handling nappies.

- Children who have not been toilet trained should wear tight-fitting waterproof nappies.

Where to get help

- Your local swimming pool
- Environmental Health Officer at your local council.

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:

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