

## Recreational Water Illness and Injury Prevention



Protect yourself and your family in the water this summer by following these Recreational Water Illness and Injury Prevention tips!

Swimming is one of the most popular sports activities in the US—and although it offers many health benefits, pools and other recreational water venues are also places where germs can be spread and injuries can happen.

**Recreational Water Illness and Injury (RWII) Prevention** focuses on the role of swimmers, aquatics and beach staff, residential pool owners and public health officials in preventing recreational water illnesses (RWIs), drowning and pool chemical injuries.

### Prevent Illnesses

Recreational water illnesses are caused by germs spread by swallowing, breathing in mists or aerosols of, or having contact with contaminated water in pools, hot tubs/spas, interactive fountains, lakes, rivers or oceans.

Contrary to popular belief, chlorine and other disinfectants do not kill germs instantly. While most germs are killed within minutes, Crypto (Cryptosporidium) can live for days. Before they are killed, these germs can cause gastrointestinal, skin, ear, respiratory, eye, neurologic and wound infections. The most commonly reported RWI is diarrhea caused by germs such as Crypto, Giardia, Shigella, norovirus and E. coli O157:H7. Swallowing just a mouthful of water that contains these germs can make you sick. Here are a few simple and effective steps that all swimmers can take each time we swim:

### Keep the poop, germs and pee out of the water

- Shower with soap before you start swimming
- Take a rinse shower before you get back into the water
- Take bathroom breaks every 60 minutes; check diapers every 30–60 minutes

- Don't swim when you have diarrhea
- Wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers
- Change diapers in the bathroom or diaper-changing area and not at poolside where germs can rinse into the water

### Check the free chlorine level and pH before getting into the water

- Pools: Proper chlorine (1–3 mg/L or parts per million [ppm]) and pH (7.2–7.8) levels maximize germ-killing power.
- Hot tubs/spas: Proper disinfectant level (chlorine [2–4 parts per million or ppm]) or bromine [4–6 ppm]) and pH (7.2–7.8) maximize germ-killing power.
- Most superstores, hardware stores and pool-supply stores sell pool test strips. *Free pool test kit: Go to the [Water Quality & Health Council \(WQHC\)'s Healthy Pools page](#) to order a free pool test kit.*
- Don't swallow the water you swim in

### Prevent Drowning

Drowning is the leading cause of injury death among children 1–4 years old. Every day, 10 people die from drowning—and 2 of those 10 are children under the age of 15. Of drowning victims who survive and are treated in emergency rooms, more than half are hospitalized or transferred for further care. These individuals often experience brain damage, which can cause memory problems, learning disabilities or permanent loss of basic functioning.

### To help prevent drowning:

- Make sure everyone knows how to swim
- Use life jackets appropriately
- Provide continuous, attentive supervision close to swimmers
- Know CPR (for older children and adults)
- Prevent access to the pool when not in use by installing and maintain barriers like 4-sided fencing and weight-bearing pool covers. —[cdc.gov](#)

## CLEAN IT UP, SWIMMERS

Pools are great for perfecting your backstroke or relaxing on your favorite float. But they can also spread diarrhea and other illnesses.

Germs don't jump into the water like we do. They surf in on people's bodies.

But what about chlorine?

Healthy pools don't have a strong chemical smell

Pool chemicals kill most germs within minutes, but some live for days.

Chemicals also break down pee, poop, sweat, dirt, and other gunk from swimmers' bodies. But this uses up the chemicals, leaving less available to kill germs.

Smell that "chlorine"? It's actually chemicals that form when chlorine mixes with gunk. These chemicals—not chlorine—make your eyes red and sting, your nose run, and make you cough.



Here are the microbes 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:

Adults  
1 tablespoon

Kids  
2 1/2 tablespoons

That's more than enough to make you sick!

Follow these 4 steps for healthier swimming:

- 1 Stay out of the water if you have diarrhea.
- 2 Shower before you get into the water.
- 3 Don't pee or poop in the water.
- 4 Don't swallow the water.

The pool is only as clean as you are!



## Warm Weather Exercise Guidelines

Take extra care when exercising in warm weather. The following tips will keep you safe in the heat:

- Exercise in the early morning or after the sun sets.
- Take frequent rest and water breaks.
- Drink water before you feel thirsty. By the time you feel thirsty, you are already dehydrated. This is especially true as you get older.
- Drink fluids before, during and after exercise.
- Choose water or a low-calorie sport drink.
- Avoid beverages with alcohol and caffeine because these can cause dehydration.
- Reduce speed or distance as needed.
- Wear light, loose-fitting clothing made of breathable fabric in light colors. Choose shady areas when possible.
- Exercise indoors during ozone alerts, extreme heat and very high humidity.
- Use sunscreen, hats and sunglasses.
- Listen to your body. Stop if you feel chest pain, short of breath, dizzy, lightheaded, weak, very fatigued, nauseated or that your heart is pounding. Get to a cool place. If these symptoms continue for more than 5 minutes, call 911. ■



## Tetanus: Make Sure Your Family Is Fully Immunized

Summertime often means family cookouts, long days playing outside, and unfortunately the cuts and scrapes that often come with outdoor fun. Bacteria, including the ones that cause tetanus, are commonly found in soil and can enter the body through these breaks in the skin. Make sure your family is protected by being up to date with their tetanus vaccine.

### Tetanus Vaccine Protection

Tetanus is an infection caused by a toxin-producing bacteria that causes your muscles to tighten and cramp painfully. Tetanus infection mainly affects the neck, chest and stomach. Tetanus is also called "lockjaw" because it often causes a person's neck and jaw muscles to lock, making it hard to open the mouth or swallow. It can also cause breathing problems, severe muscle spasms and seizures. If left untreated, tetanus can be deadly.

There are several vaccines that protect against tetanus. The DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis) vaccine is highly effective in

preventing tetanus in young children. Because protection from tetanus decreases over time, older children need to get the Tdap vaccine. After getting the Tdap vaccine as a teen, adults need to get a Td (tetanus and diphtheria) booster shot every 10 years to stay protected.

Most health insurance plans cover the cost of vaccinations, but you may want to check with your insurance provider before going to the doctor. If you don't have insurance or if it does not cover vaccines, your child may be eligible for vaccines through the Vaccines for Children program. ■

## Healthy + Delicious Summer Treats!



### Scallop Kabobs

- 3 medium green peppers, cut into 1-1/2-inch squares
- 1-1/2 lb fresh bay scallops
- 1 pint cherry tomatoes
- 1/4 cup dry white wine
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 3 Tbsp lemon juice
- garlic powder to taste
- black pepper to taste
- 4 skewers

Parboil the green peppers for two minutes. Alternately thread the first three ingredients onto the skewers. Combine the next five ingredients. Brush the kabobs with the wine/oil/lemon mixture then place on grill (or under a broiler). Grill for 15 minutes, turning and basting frequently. Serves 4.

Serving size: 1 kabob (6 oz), 224 calories, 6g total fat, 1g saturated fat, 43 mg cholesterol, 355 mg sodium, 3g total fiber, 30g protein, 13g carbohydrates, 993 mg potassium. ■

### Berry Cherry Yogurt Popsicles

- 1-1/2 cup pitted fresh or frozen cherries
- 1/2 cup fresh or frozen blackberries
- 1 Tbsp. honey
- 24 oz. vanilla Greek yogurt
- 12 (3 oz.) paper cups\*
- 12 popsicle sticks or plastic spoons (\*store-bought popsicle molds can also be used)

In a small mixing bowl, mash the cherries and berries. Drizzle on the honey and mix together. In paper cups, layer alternating spoonfuls of yogurt and fruit until full. Place a popsicle stick or plastic spoon in each cup. Freeze. When ready to serve, tear off the cup and enjoy. Makes 12 paper cup popsicles.

Per serving: 69 calories, 0g total fat, 0g saturated fat, 12g carbohydrate, 5g protein, 1g dietary fiber, 18 mg sodium. ■