

Operating Public Swimming Pools

Preventing Recreational Water Illnesses (RWIs) is a multifaceted issue that requires participation from pool staff, swimmers, and health departments. Poor maintenance can result in low disinfectant levels that can allow the spread of a variety of germs that cause diarrhea as well as skin and respiratory RWIs. Although pool staff alone cannot completely stop these complex problems, they play a key role in assuring the health of pool visitors. By following a few simple steps, aquatic managers and staff can lead the way.



- Obtain state or local authority-recommended operator and chemical handling training. National training courses are listed at www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/pools/pool-operator-training.html
- Ensure availability of trained operation staff during the weekends when pools are used most.
- Maintain free chlorine levels continuously between 1–3 parts per million.
- Maintain the pH level of the water at 7.2–7.8.
- Test pH and disinfectant levels at least twice per day (hourly when in heavy use).
- Maintain accurate records of disinfectant/pH measurements and maintenance activities.
- Maintain filtration and recirculation systems according to manufacturer recommendations.
- Ensure cleanliness and safety of restrooms, showers, and diaper changing areas.
- Enforce bather load limits.
- Scrub pool surfaces to remove any slime layer.
- Drain and replace portions of the water on a weekly to monthly basis, depending on usage and water quality.
- Treat the pool with a biocidal shock treatment on a daily to weekly basis, depending on water quality and frequency of water replacement.
- Institute a preventative maintenance program to replace equipment or parts before they fail (e.g., feed pump tubing, injectors, sensor probes).
- Provide disinfection guidelines for fecal accidents and body fluid spills.
- Develop employee policies for staff who are ill with RWIs (e.g., diarrhea) and a communication chain for reporting operation problems.
- Implement large group orientations, particularly for young children, and bathroom break policies to promote healthy swimming.
- Educate pool users and parents about RWIs and appropriate pool use (i.e., no swimming when ill with diarrhea).

For more suggestions for preventing RWIs at your aquatics facility, see www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/pools/twelve-steps-for-prevention-rwi.html