



# Facts About “Hot Tub Rash” and “Swimmer’s Ear” (*Pseudomonas*)

## What is *Pseudomonas* and how can it affect me?

*Pseudomonas* (sue-doh-MOH-nass) *aeruginosa* is a major cause of infections commonly known as “hot tub rash” and “swimmer’s ear.” This germ is commonly found in water and soil.

Hot tub rash can affect people of all ages, but swimmer’s ear is more common in children and young adults. Symptoms of hot tub rash and swimmer’s ear include:

### Hot Tub Rash (*Pseudomonas dermatitis*)

- > Itchy spots on the skin that become a bumpy red rash
- > Rash in areas previously covered by swimsuit
- > Pus-filled blisters around hair follicles

### Swimmer’s Ear (*Otitis externa*)

- > Pain when infected ear is gently tugged
- > Itchiness inside the ear
- > Pus draining from the ear

Most hot tub rashes clear up without medical treatment; **if your rash lasts longer than a few days, contact a health care provider for treatment. If you suspect that you have swimmer’s ear, contact a health care provider for treatment.**

## How is *Pseudomonas* spread?

Hot tub rash **can occur if contaminated hot tub water comes in contact with skin for a long period of time.** Swimmer’s ear **can occur if contaminated water** from swimming pools, water parks, interactive fountains, water play areas, hot tubs, lakes, rivers, springs, ponds, streams, or the ocean **stays in direct contact with the ear canal.**

## How do I protect myself, my family, and others?

Take action! Because hot tub rash and swimmer’s ear are both common infections, following steps to help prevent them is essential.

### Steps for All Swimmers and Hot Tub Users

#### Hot Tub Rash

- > Remove swimsuits and shower with soap after getting out of the water.
- > Clean swimsuits after getting out of the water.

#### Swimmer’s Ear

- > Dry your ears after swimming. If it is difficult to get water out of your ear, apply a few drops of an alcohol-based ear product into the ear. You can find this product at your drug store.
- > Avoid putting objects in the ear (for example, fingers or cotton swabs) that might scratch the ear canal and cause infection.
- > Do not swim in locations that have been closed because of pollution.

*Pseudomonas* can multiply quickly when water disinfectant levels drop, so testing your pool or hot tub’s disinfectant and pH levels is also critical.

### Steps for Testing Pool or Hot Tub Water

- > Purchase pool test strips at your local home improvement or pool supply store (be sure to check the expiration date).
- > Use the test strips to check pools for adequate chlorine (1–3 parts per million [ppm]) and check hot tubs for adequate chlorine or bromine (2–5 ppm). Pool and hot tub water pH should be maintained at 7.2–7.8.
- > If you find improper chlorine, bromine, and/or pH levels, tell the pool/hot tub operator or owner immediately.

## GENERAL PUBLIC

For more information on preventing illness and injury at the pool and hot tub, visit [www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/](http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/) For further instructions on how to use pool and hot tub test strips, visit [www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/pools/pool-spa-test-strip-instructions.html](http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/pools/pool-spa-test-strip-instructions.html)

## POOL AND HOT TUB OPERATORS

For guidelines and resources on how to prevent *Pseudomonas* and other germs from contaminating the water, visit [www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/audience-aquatics-staff.html](http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/audience-aquatics-staff.html)

