Healthy and Safe Swimming Week 2018
Sample Feature

It's Not the Chlorine in the Pool that's Making Your Eyes Red…

Have your eyes ever started to sting and turn red when you were swimming in a pool? Did you think it was because of the chlorine in the water? Have you ever walked into an indoor pool area, gotten a whiff of a strong chemical smell, and thought, "Wow, there's a lot of chlorine in the pool?"

It's actually not the chlorine. You're smelling a group of chemical compounds created when chlorine reacts with pee, poop, sweat, or dirt from swimmers. These chloramines irritate the eyes and respiratory tract, can aggravate asthma, and cause a strong chemical smell at indoor pools. These chloramines are different from the type of chloramine which is sometimes used to treat our drinking water.

Healthy swimming depends, in part, on what we swimmers keep out of the treated water we swim in this summer and year-round. We all share the water we swim in, and we each need to do our part to keep ourselves, our families, and our friends healthy. Don't forget, in addition to being an all-American way to have fun with family and friends, swimming can be a way to keep physically active. Just 2.5 hours of physical activity, including water-based physical activity, per week has health benefits for everyone. The health benefits for children are wide reaching. Studies have shown that children with asthma might have fewer symptoms when swimming regularly compared with other asthmatic children and that children in general benefit socially from contact with other children at recreational water venues (for example, pools and lakes). For pregnant women, water-based physical activity can help regulate body temperature, minimize stress on joints during exercise, and prevent or control diabetes brought on by pregnancy. Water-based physical activity also improves women's bone health after menopause and improves older adults' ability to carry out everyday activities.

Popular Olympic swimmers have publicly admitted to peeing in the pool. They've laughed about it, and comedians have joked about it. But really, where else is it acceptable to pee in public? Mixing chlorine and pee not only creates chloramines—it also uses up the chlorine in the pool, which would otherwise kill germs. These germs can get into the water when they wash off swimmers' bodies or when infected swimmers have diarrheal incidents in the water. Just one diarrheal incident can release enough *Cryptosporidium* (or "Crypto" for short) into the water that swallowing a mouthful can cause diarrhea lasting 2–3 weeks.

Even when the concentration of a pool disinfection chemical (chlorine or bromine) and the pH (which can maximize chlorine's and bromine's germ-killing power) are well maintained, germs aren't instantly killed. Crypto, the leading cause of disease outbreaks linked to pools, can survive in an adequately chlorinated pool for days. In 2000–2014 (the last year for which national data are available), over 200 outbreaks in the United States were caused by Crypto and linked to pools, water playgrounds, and hot tubs/spas. **<NOTE: Consider substituting national statistics with state/local statistics to increase**

state/local interest.> This is a reminder that the water we swim in and share is not germ free and this is why it's important for each of us to do our part to keep germs, pee, poop, sweat, and dirt out of the water in the first place.

To help prevent chloramines from forming and to protect your health and the health of your family and friends, here are a few simple and effective steps all of us can take each time we swim:

- Don't swim or let your kids swim if sick with diarrhea.
- Shower before you get in the water.
- Don't pee or poop in the water.
- Don't swallow the water.

Every hour—everyone out!

- Take kids on bathroom breaks.
- Check diapers, and change them in a bathroom or diaper-changing area—not poolside—to keep germs away from the pool.

These steps will help you protect yourself and your loved ones while maximizing the health benefits and swimming enjoyment. Healthy swimming is not just about the steps the pool operators and pool inspectors take. So let's all do our part to help keep ourselves, our families, and our friends healthy this summer and year round.

Remember…Think Healthy. Swim Healthy. Be Healthy!