

Recreational Water Illness and Injury Prevention Week 2013 Toolkit

How We Swimmers Contaminate Pools

Prevention Response Tools for Public Health Professionals

Contents:

- **Cover letter** from CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases, and National Center for Environmental Health
- **Outreach suggestions** for community partners and the public
- **List of links** for CDC Healthy Swimming information and resources
- **Sample press release** for local customization
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- **Sample proclamation** for local customization



Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Dear Colleague:

The week before Memorial Day, May 20–26, 2013, marks the ninth annual **Recreational Water Illness and Injury (RWII) Prevention Week**. As outdoor pools and beaches around the country open and Americans get ready for a summer full of swimming, this is an ideal time to raise awareness of RWIIs and promote healthy and safe swimming in your community. RWII Prevention Week is also a great time to reach out to public pool operators, beach managers, the media, residential pool owners, and the general public to initiate action.

This year's RWII Prevention Week theme is "How We Swimmers Contaminate Pools." It focuses on how practicing good swimmer hygiene can prevent recreational water illness.

Additionally, stay tuned for the first draft edition of the Model Aquatic Health Code (MAHC; www.cdc.gov/mahc/). This single document integrates individual modules, in which first-round public comments have been addressed, and will be available for final public comment this summer. Please provide comments and make sure public health's voice is heard in the MAHC development process. As you know, the MAHC is a set of science-based and best-practice guidelines to reduce the risk of outbreaks, drowning, and pool-chemical poisoning. The first official edition of the MAHC is expected to be released by the 2014 summer swim season. As with FDA's Model National Food Code, the plan is to update the MAHC regularly.

To encourage and support your RWII Prevention Week efforts, we have provided a health promotion tool kit, which includes community outreach suggestions; a web-based resource list; and a sample press release, op-ed piece, and proclamation. We hope you will find these useful as you engage your community in RWII Prevention Week awareness efforts and educational activities. Please forward this message and its attachments to your communications, environmental health, and epidemiology colleagues so that they can collaborate with you in this important public health initiative.

We would love to hear about the activities in your area related to RWII Prevention Week; please send details to healthyswimming@cdc.gov.

For additional information about Recreational Water Illness and Injury Prevention Week, visit: www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming/rwi_prevention_week.htm

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Recreational Water Illness and Injury (RWII) Prevention Week: May 20–26, 2013
Outreach Suggestions for Community Partners and the Public

All Audiences

- Update (or create) RWII Prevention Week page on your agency's website.
 - Copy content from CDC's Healthy Swimming and Injury Prevention websites while maintaining the look and feel of your website (i.e., content syndication). Contact healthywater@cdc.gov for more information.
 - Include links to CDC's Healthy Swimming and Water-Related Injury Prevention websites and EPA's Beaches and CPSC's PoolSafely websites (see web links in toolkit).



Media

- Provide a press release to media outlets (see sample in toolkit).
 - Share information on:
 - How poor swimmer hygiene leads to contamination of recreational water and threatens swimmer health.
 - Water safety, drowning prevention, and the latest data on fatal and nonfatal drowning.
- Hold a press conference during RWIIPW.
- Write an op-ed piece on healthy swimming (see sample in toolkit) in your local newspaper.

Swimmers and Parents

- Disseminate healthy and safe swimming messages through newsletters, blogs, etc. distributed by schools, child care centers, camps, etc.
- Disseminate healthy and safe swimming promotion materials at pools, beaches, fairs, etc.
 - Check out CDC promotion materials: www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/resources/index.html.

Aquatic-Facility Operators and Beach Managers

- Include information on healthy and safe swimming in pool operator and beach manager training.
- Collaborate with pool operators and beach managers to promote this observance.
 - Provide healthy and safe swimming promotion materials.
- Promote learn-to-swim and CPR training opportunities as a community drowning prevention strategy.
 - Check out CPSC's World's Largest Swim Lesson: www.worldslargestswimminglesson.org/.

Healthcare Providers

- Provide healthy and safe swimming promotion materials.
- Engage in activities of your local chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (www.aap.org/) or other organization for healthcare professionals.

Community Leaders

- Create fact sheets for community leaders, detailing specifics about your agency's RWII Prevention Week efforts (e.g., program administrators, boards of health, elected officials).
- Collaborate on a RWII Prevention Week proclamation (see sample in toolkit).

Let us know about your activities related to Recreational Water Illness and Injury Prevention Week, email us at healthyswimming@cdc.gov

Recreational Water Illness and Injury Prevention Week 2013
Links to CDC Healthy Swimming Information and Resources

General Information	
CDC's Water-Related Injury Prevention Site	www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Water-Safety/index.html
CDC's Healthy Swimming Site	www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming
Overview of RWIs	www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/rwi/
Healthy Swimming and Injury Prevention Resources	
Injury & Skin Cancer Prevention	www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/injury/
CPSC's Pool Safely	www.poolsafely.gov/
Healthy Swimming Brochures, Posters, Etc.	www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/resources
Triple A's of Healthy Swimming	http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/protection/triple-a-healthy-swimming.html
Pathogens Transmitted at Recreational Water Venues	www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/resources/fact-sheets/#illnesses
Swim Diapers/Swim Pants	www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/pools/swim-diapers-swim-pants.html
Breastfeeding in Pools and Hot Tubs/Spas NEW	www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/pools/breastfeeding-in-pools.html
Resources for Public Health Professionals	
Healthy Swimming Data/Statistics and Outbreak Reports	www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/data/ www.cdc.gov/healthywater/statistics/wbdoss/surveillance.html
Online Environmental Public Health Training: Swimming Pools and Recreational Facilities	www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/eLearn/EPHOC.htm
Model Aquatic Health Code	www.cdc.gov/mahc
Press and Matte Releases	www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/newsroom/press-releases/
Resources for Aquatic-Facility Operators	
Fecal Incident Response Recommendations	www.cdc.gov/healthywater/pdf/swimming/pools/fecal-incident-response-recommendations.pdf
Recommendations for Preventing Pool Chemical-Associated Injuries	www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/pools/preventing-pool-chemical-injuries.html
Animals and Pools	www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/pools/animals/
Open Water Resources	
EPA's Beaches Website	http://water.epa.gov/type/oceb/beaches/index.cfm
General info: Oceans, Lakes, Rivers	www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/oceans/
Healthy Swimming Links by Additional Audiences	
Medical Professionals	www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/audience-medicalprofessionals.html
En Español NEWLY EXPANDED	www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/audience-espanol.html

Updated April 24, 2013

Recreational Water Illness and Injury Prevention Week 2013
Sample Press Release

For Release [date]

Contact: Name, title
Phone/e-mail

RWII Prevention Week 2013: How We Swimmers Contaminate Pools

<City, state> — The week before Memorial Day (May 20–26, 2013) is Recreational Water Illness and Injury (RWII) Prevention Week. Every year, thousands of Americans get sick with recreational water illnesses (RWIs), which are caused by germs found in places where we swim. The goal of RWII Prevention Week is to raise awareness about healthy and safe swimming.

Have your eyes ever started to sting and turn red while you were swimming in a pool? Did you think it was because of the chlorine in the water? It's not actually the chlorine that makes your eyes red. It's di- or tri-chloramines. These chloramines form when chlorine combines with what comes out of (e.g., pee) or washes off of (e.g., sweat and personal care products) swimmers' bodies and are different from the mono-chloramine, which is sometimes used to treat our drinking water. Di- and tri-chloramines irritate the eyes and respiratory tract and can even aggravate asthma. But the mixing of chlorine with urine not only creates chloramines—it also uses up the chlorine in the pool, which would otherwise kill germs. These germs get into the water when they wash off of swimmers' bodies or when infected swimmers have diarrhea in the water. Chlorine and other pool water treatments don't kill germs instantly. And just one diarrheal incident can release enough germs into the water that swallowing a mouthful can cause diarrhea lasting up to 2–3 weeks.

Swimmers, It's Our Job to Keep Germs, Poop, and Pee out of the Water

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. To help protect yourself and other swimmers from germs, here are a few simple and effective steps all swimmers can take each time we swim:

- **Keep the poop and pee out of the water.**
 - Don't swim when you have diarrhea.
 - Shower with soap before you start swimming.
 - Take a rinse shower before you get back into the water.
 - Take bathroom breaks every 60 minutes.
 - Wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers.
- **Check the chlorine and pH levels before getting into the water.**
 - Proper chlorine (1–3 mg/L or parts per million [ppm]) and pH (7.2–7.8) levels maximize germ-killing power.
 - Most superstores, hardware stores, and pool-supply stores sell pool test strips.
- **Don't swallow the water you swim in.**

Parents of young children should take a few extra steps:

- **Take children on bathroom breaks every 60 minutes or check diapers every 30–60 minutes.**
 - Change diapers in the bathroom or diaper-changing area and not at poolside where germs can rinse into the water.

Remember...Think Healthy. Swim Healthy. Be Healthy!

For more information about healthy swimming, visit www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming/.

Recreational Water Illness and Injury Prevention Week 2013
Sample Op-Ed

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

Dear Editor,

Have your eyes ever started to sting and turn red while 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, got a whiff of a strong chemical smell, and thought, "Wow, there's a lot of chlorine in the pool?" It's not actually the chlorine. It's di- and tri-chloramines, or what you get when chlorine combines with what comes out of (e.g., pee) or washes off of (e.g., sweat and personal care products) swimmers' bodies and are different from the mono-chloramine, which is sometimes used to treat our drinking water. Di- and tri-chloramines irritate the eyes and respiratory tract and can even aggravate asthma. Chloramines are also what give pools a strong chemical smell.

Healthy swimming depends on what we swimmers bring into the pool — and what we keep out of it. 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.

In addition to being an all-American way to have fun with family and friends, swimming is a good form of physical activity. Two-and-a-half hours of water-based (or other forms of) physical activity per week has health benefits across a lifetime. Water-based physical activity can protect the health of pregnant mothers by helping to regulate body temperature and minimize stress on joints during exercise as well as help 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 carry out everyday activities. The health benefits for children are wide-reaching, as well. Studies have shown that children with asthma may 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.

Recently, popular Olympic swimmers have publicly admitted to peeing in the pool. They laughed about it, and comedians joked about it. But really, where else is it acceptable to publically urinate? Mixing chlorine and urine not only creates di- and tri-chloramines — it also uses up the chlorine in the pool, which would otherwise kill germs. These germs get into the water when they wash off of swimmers' bodies or when infected swimmers have diarrheal incidents in the water. Just one diarrheal incident can release enough germs into the water that swallowing a mouthful can cause diarrhea lasting up to 2–3 weeks.

Even when the levels of chlorine and other pool water treatments are well maintained, they don't kill germs instantly. *Cryptosporidium* (or *Crypto*), the leading cause of disease outbreaks linked to pools, can survive in a properly chlorinated pool for 10 days. In 2007–2008 (the last year for which national data

are available), 116 disease outbreaks linked to pools were detected in the United States. Half of the outbreaks were caused by Crypto and they sickened more than 12,000 people. Another 24 disease outbreaks were caused by germs that are killed by chlorine within minutes. **<Consider substituting national statistics with state and local statistics to increase local interest.>** These statistics highlight why it's important to keep germs, poop, and pee out of the water in the first place.

To prevent chloramines from forming and to protect yourself and other swimmers from germs, here are a few simple and effective steps all swimmers can take each time we swim:

- **Keep the poop and pee out of the water.**
 - Don't swim when you have diarrhea.
 - Shower with soap before you start swimming.
 - Take a rinse shower before you get back into the water.
 - Take bathroom breaks every 60 minutes.
 - Wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers.
- **Check the chlorine and pH levels before getting into the water.**
 - Proper chlorine (1–3 mg/L or parts per million [ppm]) and pH (7.2–7.8) levels maximize germ-killing power.
 - Most superstores, hardware stores, and pool-supply stores sell pool test strips.
- **Don't swallow the water you swim in.**

Parents of young children should take a few extra steps:

- **Take children on bathroom breaks every 60 minutes or check diapers every 30–60 minutes.**
 - Change diapers in the bathroom or diaper-changing area and not at poolside where germs can rinse into the water.

These steps will help you minimize risk of illness and maximize health benefits and pool enjoyment. Healthy swimming is not just about the steps the pool operators and pool inspectors take — so let's all do our part to keep ourselves, our families, and our friends healthy this summer and year-round.

Remember...Think Healthy. Swim Healthy. Be Healthy!

**Recreational Water Illness and Injury Prevention Week 2013
Sample Proclamation**

Adapted from proclamation developed by
Environmental Management Department of Sacramento County, California

**RESOLUTION OF <INSERT NAME OF AUTHORIZING ORGANIZATION/PERSON>
PROCLAIMING MAY 20–26, 2013 AS
“RECREATIONAL WATER ILLNESS AND INJURY PREVENTION WEEK”
IN <INSERT NAME OF JURISDICTION>**

WHEREAS, the <INSERT NAME OF AUTHORIZING ORGANIZATION/PERSON> considers the health and safety of its residents and visitors its highest priority; and

WHEREAS, during the week of May 20–26, 2013, the <INSERT NAME OF PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY>, together with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), will be conducting educational outreach to the public on preventing recreational water illness and injury (RWII) — i.e., illness and injury linked to the water in which we swim; and

WHEREAS, on behalf of the residents and visitors of <INSERT NAME OF JURISDICTION>, we are pleased to join local, state and federal agencies, in ensuring healthy and safe swimming in <INSERT NAME OF JURISDICTION>; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of the ongoing efforts made by the dedicated men and women who are trained to ensure health and safety standards are met at public swimming pools and hot tubs/spas in this <State/County/City>; and

WHEREAS, the theme of Recreational Water Illness and Injury Prevention Week 2013 is *How We Swimmers Contaminate Pools* and the public is being educated through the use of health communication materials (videos, posters, fact sheets, etc.) on preventing RWIIs; and

WHEREAS, the <INSERT NAME OF PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY> provides information to the public on actively protecting their health and safety and that of others; and

WHEREAS, the <INSERT NAME OF PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY> provides <INSERT LIST OF PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY’S EFFORTS TO PROMOTE HEALTHY AND SAFE SWIMMING, INCLUDING ANY TRAINING WORKSHOPS FOR POOL OPERATORS AND POSITIVE OUTCOMES>; and

WHEREAS, the <INSERT NAME OF PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY> conducts over <INSERT COUNT> inspections of public swimming pools and hot tubs/spas; and

WHEREAS, the week of May 20–26, 2013 has been set aside to raise public awareness of the importance of healthy and safe swimming and to reinforce education among those that operate and maintain swimming pools and hot tubs/spas;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the <INSERT NAME OF AUTHORIZING ORGANIZATION/PERSON>, does hereby proclaim the week of May 20–26, 2013 as “**RECREATIONAL WATER ILLNESS AND INJURY PREVENTION WEEK**” in <INSERT NAME OF JURISDICTION> in order to focus attention on the importance of preventing RWIIs for the protection of our residents and visitors now and throughout the year;

<ADD JURISDICTION-SPECIFIC AUTHORIZING SIGNATURES, SEALS, ETC.>