



## Press Release

Embargoed for Release Until  
Thursday, May 14, 2009 at 12 p.m. ET

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### Pool Chemical Injuries Send Thousands to ER Each Year *2009 National Recreational Water Illness Prevention Week is May 18-24*

Pool chemical injuries account for as many as 5,200 emergency room visits each year. A new study by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) shows that these injuries are preventable, and during 2007 almost half of those injuries occurred at a residence.

According to the study, published in CDC's [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report \(MMWR\)](#), persons can be injured by inhaling fumes when they open pool chemical containers, attempting to pre-dissolve pool chemicals, or handling them improperly. Persons can also be injured when chemicals splash into the eyes. These preventable injuries typically occur during the summer swimming season, from Memorial Day to Labor Day, and can occur in or out of the pool.

In addition to pool chemical injuries, thousands of people each year suffer from recreational water illnesses. The study was released ahead of CDC's [National Recreational Water Illness Prevention Week](#), May 18-24. The week aims to raise awareness about healthy swimming behaviors, including ways to prevent recreational water illnesses and injuries. Recreational water illnesses are illnesses spread by swallowing, inhaling vapors, or having contact with contaminated water in swimming pools, water parks, spas, interactive fountains, lakes, rivers, or oceans.

"Pool chemicals make the water we swim in safer by protecting us from germs, but these same chemicals can also cause injuries if they are not properly handled," said Michele Hlavsa, the study's lead author and epidemiologist at CDC.

Public pool operators and residential pool owners can protect themselves and swimmers by always securing pool chemicals, reading product names and manufacturer's directions before each use, using appropriate protective gear including safety glasses and gloves, and never mixing chlorine products with each other, with acid, or with any other substance. To access a complete set of prevention recommendations, visit [www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming/pdf/pool\\_chem\\_assoc\\_inj.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming/pdf/pool_chem_assoc_inj.pdf).

The study looked at 36 pool chemical-associated health events reported to the New York state Department of Health for recreational water venues, such as pools, water parks, and interactive water fountains, during 1983-2006. The report also includes analyses of 1998-2007 emergency room visit data from the [National Electronic Injury Surveillance System](#) and 2007 data from the [National Poison Data System](#).

Swimming is the second most popular sports activity in the United States, with approximately 339 million swimming visits to recreational water venues.



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The best way to prevent recreational water illnesses is to keep germs out of the pool in the first place. Everyone can help create healthy swimming experiences by not swimming when ill with diarrhea, not swallowing pool water, taking kids on bathroom breaks and practicing good hygiene.

For more information about healthy swimming, visit CDC's Health Swimming Web site at [www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming).

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