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Making a Splash – Safely: Illinois Poison Center Shares Pool Safety Tips for Summer Fun

Beware of Contaminated Water and Toxic Pool Chemicals That Could Disrupt Your Summer

CHICAGO - As summer officially begins, the Illinois Poison Center (IPC) is reminding families to stay safe around the pool.

“Whether you're diving into a pool, relaxing in a hot tub, or splashing around at a water park, it's important to remember that germs can be lurking in the water,” says IPC Medical Director Michael Wahl, M.D. “Recreational water illnesses, or RWIs, are a real risk—diarrhea is the most common, but they can also cause other gastrointestinal, skin, ear, respiratory, eye, neurologic, and wound infections.”

Even with proper pool maintenance, some microscopic parasites like *Cryptosporidium* (also known as “Crypto”), are able to survive up to 10 days in treated water and can cause diarrhea for weeks after symptoms stop. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/disease/index.html), swallowing as little as 10 Crypto germs can cause an infection.

IPC urges everyone to take the following precautions to keep themselves and their fellow swimmers healthy:

- Avoid swimming if you have diarrhea;
- Shower with soap before swimming to help remove germs that could contaminate the water;
- Do not swallow pool water;
- Do not sit on water jets; and
- While at the pool, take children and infants on bathroom breaks and check for dirty diapers every hour.

Swimmers aren't the only ones who need to be conscious about safety this summer. Those who own or operate pools should be mindful of the chemicals in pool disinfectants, which can be dangerous when used improperly. The chlorine in swimming pools is necessary for sanitation, but it can pose health risks. Exposure to chlorine can cause skin irritation, eye irritation, respiratory

problems, and even increase the risk of asthma and allergies, especially for children. This is especially true if too much chlorine is added to the pool water. **The IPC manages over 200 exposures to pool related chemicals every year.**

To avoid medical complications:

- Always use the correct amount of chlorine pool cleaner and other substances;
- Handle and store chlorine products as indicated on their packaging; and
- Unless directed, never mix materials. They can create toxic substances like chlorine gas.

For more summer safety tips from the IPC, [click here](#).

IPC's toxicology specialists, who serve most all languages, resolve over 90% of poison exposure cases over the phone, eliminating the need for referral to a healthcare facility or transport. Calls to the IPC helpline (1-800-222-1222) are free and confidential. IPC experts are available to provide information and treatment advice 24 hours per day, 365 days per year, including holidays.

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The Illinois Poison Center is a nonprofit health service that provides the people of Illinois with comprehensive and trusted information and treatment advice on potentially harmful substances via a free, confidential 24-hour helpline staffed by physicians, pharmacists and nurses.