



CATAWBA COUNTY

P O Box 389 - Newton, North Carolina 28658 - (828) 465-8270 - Fax (828) 465-8276 - TDD (828) 465-8200
Public Health – Environmental Health Division

Summer Pool Safety Tips

Summer is here and local pools are now open. While swimming in a pool can be a great way to stay active and keep cool, it can also be a source of illness or injury. Catawba County Public Health reminds you that healthy swimming behaviors are important in preventing illness and injury when enjoying pools.

Outbreaks of recreational water illnesses (RWI) continue to occur in the United States each year. Sixty-two percent of these outbreaks are related to the chlorine-resistant pathogen, *Cryptosporidium*, ("Crypto") which is introduced into the pool by swimmers who are ill with diarrhea and spread to other swimmers when they swallow the contaminated water. These outbreaks underscore the continuing need to educate people about recreational water illness prevention to ensure a healthy swimming experience.

Germs on and in swimmers' bodies end up in the water and can make other people sick. Even healthy swimmers can get sick from RWIs, but the young, elderly, pregnant women and immunosuppressed persons are especially at risk, if proper precautions are not taken.

Swimming and diving into a pool may seem like harmless activities, but every year many people injure themselves because they do not pay attention to proper safety tips.

In fact, more than 850 spinal cord injuries result from diving accidents every year. Of those, more than 300 injuries occur at a home pool. And a majority of pool-related spinal cord injuries result in paralysis of all four limbs.

Among unintentional injuries, drowning has been the second leading cause of death to children under age 5, after motor vehicle incidents. In 2002, an estimated 1,600 children were treated in hospital emergency rooms for submersion injuries. Many of these deaths and injuries occur in residential pools.

One of the most tragic aspects of drowning deaths is that they are preventable, but there is no foolproof method of prevention. For increased safety at residential pools, Catawba County Public Health recommends using layers of protection. This includes, constant supervision of young children; placing barriers such as a fence with a self-closing, self-latching gate around your pool to prevent access; and being prepared in case of an emergency.

To ensure that public pools meet state requirements, Catawba County Public Health conducts an inspection program in which pools are inspected for safety and sanitary requirements before a permit to operate is issued, and further inspections are conducted during the season of operation.



"Leading the Way to A Healthier Community"
www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth/ehmain.asp



Tips for making your summer pool experience safer and healthier:

- Do not swim if you have sore eyes, ears or nose. These may be indicators that you have an illness or infection that could be transmitted to others. Additionally, do not swim if you have open sores, a cold or a communicable disease. Doing so may expose others to bacteria or disease.
- Take a shower with soap prior to putting on your bathing suit. This will reduce the amount of bacteria and other contaminants on the skin that could end up in the water.
- Do not spit, spout or blow your nose in the water. This is another way in which bacteria could be introduced into the pool water.
- Shower after using the toilet before returning to the pool. This will help to reduce the possibility of fecal bacteria contaminating the pool water. Also keep babies in diapers out of the pool, as this is another possible source of fecal contamination.
- Chlorine used properly can help reduce the amount of bacteria in the pool water. Use the correct amount prescribed for your pool size. Overuse of chlorine will not provide more protection from bacteria, but too much chlorine will make the water less acceptable for swimmers.
- Do not run or engage in horseplay around the pool area. This will reduce the possibility of slips, falls and more serious injuries.
- Do not bring glass items into the pool area. Glass can be easily broken on hard pool surfaces, creating the possibility of cuts on hands and feet.
- Do not dive into the shallow end of the pool. Following this guidance could prevent serious head and neck injuries.
- Make sure there is always a lifeguard or someone who is certified in cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) at poolside. In the event someone is drowning, a quick response can prevent a tragedy.
- Check to make sure life-saving equipment is standing by.

As a minimum, every pool should have: a phone nearby to call 9-1-1, a first aid kit to treat any minor injuries that may occur and lifesaving equipment (life preserver with a rope and a shepherd's crook). This will allow a quick response to any situation that may occur.