

Swimming

Enjoy the Water and Stay Healthy

2010 National Recreational Water Illness (RWI) Prevention Week

To prepare for the pools opening Memorial Weekend, this week (May 24–30, 2010) is the sixth annual National Recreational Water Illness (RWI) Prevention Week. The goal of this observance is to raise awareness about healthy swimming behaviors, including ways to prevent recreational water illnesses (RWIs). RWIs are caused by germs spread by swallowing, breathing in mists, or having contact with contaminated water in swimming pools, water parks, hot tubs, interactive fountains, or water play areas. It is an ideal time to reach out to public pool operators, beach managers, the media, residential pool owners, and the public to initiate action.

RWI Prevention Week 2010 Themes: Pool Inspections and the Triple A's of Healthy Swimming

The themes of RWI Prevention Week 2010 are pool inspections and the Triple A's of Healthy Swimming. Pool inspection data can help pool programs identify common health code violations and determine priorities for keeping their facilities healthy. Having the right disinfectant and pH levels in recreational water is essential to stopping the spread of germs that cause RWIs. Although pool inspectors check to make sure these levels are right, they can't be at every pool every day.

To help ensure a healthy swimming experience every time, we are encouraging swimmers to follow the Triple A's of Healthy Swimming: Awareness, Action, and Advocacy.

Awareness

- Visit CDC's Healthy Swimming website at www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming
- Learn how to protect yourself and others from RWIs and follow the Six Steps for Healthy Swimming (listed below)

Action

- Check pool water yourself using test strips purchased at your local retailer or pool supply store. Don't get in the water if chlorine or pH is outside the ideal range. CDC recommends the following water quality ranges:
 - Free chlorine level 1–3 parts per million (ppm)
 - pH 7.2–7.8
 - **Free test strip kits can be ordered at <http://healthypools.org/freeteststrips/>**
 - Ask the pool operator if they are certified.

Advocacy

- Ask the pool operator the following questions:
 - Are you a certified operator?
 - Are the free chlorine and pH levels checked at least 2 times per day and more often when the pool is heavily used?
 - What is the latest pool inspection score?
 - Educate other swimmers about RWIs to promote healthy swimming

To learn more about the importance of following the Triple A's of Healthy Swimming, read the [CDC report on common pool inspection violations](#).

Recreational Water Illnesses (RWIs)

The best way to prevent RWIs is to keep germs out of the pool in the first place. Follow these six steps for a safe and healthy swimming experience:

Three Steps for all Swimmers:

- Don't swim when you have diarrhea.
- Don't swallow pool water.
- Practice good hygiene. Shower with soap before swimming and wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers. Germs on your body end up in the water.

Three Steps for Parents of Young Children:

- Take your kids on bathroom breaks or check diapers often.
- Change diapers in a bathroom or a diaper-changing area and not at poolside.
- Wash your children thoroughly (especially the rear end) with soap and water before they go swimming.

How to get the information out:

All Audiences:

- Announce RWI Prevention Week—May 24–30, 2010
- Create an RWI page on your agency's website if one does not already exist
- Include links to CDC's Healthy Swimming website

Media:

- Provide a release to media outlets

- Invite media to “shadow” an environmental health specialist or a pool operator to learn how to protect the public’s health
- Share information, such as:
 - General information on how germs that cause RWIs are spread and the Six Steps for Healthy Swimming
 - Recent outbreaks, including the public’s important role in prevention measures

Community Leaders:

- Create fact sheets detailing specifics about local and state RWI Prevention programs for community leaders (program administrators, boards of health, elected officials)
- Provide suggested resolutions related to RWI Prevention Week for use by area decision makers

Pool Operators:

- Adopt and promote RWI prevention week with information for facility customers/guests
- Provide RWI prevention tips and provide Healthy Swimming posters and brochures
- Train pool operators to build their awareness of risks and prevention strategies

Swimmers and Parents:

- Encourage them to enroll in the Home Pool Essentials:™ Maintenance and safety online course from the American Red Cross and NSPF® to better understand safety and maintenance aspects of pools and hot tubs.
www.HomePoolEssentials.org

Healthcare Providers:

- Provide education materials
- Send healthcare providers links to various health-related data on water-related diseases and injuries
- Engage local chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), <http://www.aap.org/>, and other organizations of health care professionals.
- Encourage parents to take the [Home Pool Essentials](#) online course to reduce risk at the pool for family and friends.

For more information, visit:

- [CDC's Healthy Swimming website](#)
- [Crypto tool kit and outbreak alert system](#)
- [Home Pool Essentials: Maintenance and Safety Online Training Course](#)
- [Online Seminars on RWI Prevention](#)