

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“Recreational Water Illness and Injury Prevention Week - 2013”

(Coldwater, MI). 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 Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency wants to remind swimmers and pool owners that by following some simple steps, you can help to ensure a healthy and safe swimming experience for everyone.

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.

According to Rebecca Burns, Environmental Health Director for the health department, “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. 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 waterborne illnesses, check out our website at www.bhsj.org.

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