Myth or Fact

I can't get sick from swimming in a pool.

Swallowing, breathing, or having contact with contaminated water from swimming pools can spread illnesses. To prevent illness while swimming, be sure to maintain a sanitizer residual at all times.

A clear pool means clean pool water.

Microorganisms can be present even in a pool that appears clean. A pool can still look clear and not have a sanitizer residual. For example, a low pH can give a false positive of a clean pool. Think of it as an acid bath!

When I smell a strong odor of pool chemicals, it means the water has lots of chlorine and it's time to swim.

The smell is a result of the buildup of chloramines, where the chlorine is tied up and not able to kill contaminants in the water. A clean and properly sanitized pool should not have a chlorine odor.

When my eyes get red after swimming, it is because the chlorine is too high.

Red eyes and itchy skin are usually caused by improper pH or high chloramine levels. Surprisingly, the pool may actually need additional chlorine to get rid of the chloramines and sanitize the water.

If a child is wearing a swim diaper there is no chance for contamination of the water.

Swim diapers are not leak proof and if an 'accident' occurs then a risk of contamination occurs. If a child is going to wear a swim diaper, make sure the child has been cleaned thoroughly with soap and diaper is form fitting.

The chlorine in my pool must be too high because my blonde hair turned green and my bathing suit turned blue-green.

Chlorine after all is bleach. The green color is a result of copper in the water. The copper comes from a copper based algaecide, source water, or corroded copper plumbing. A sequestering agent must be used to remove the copper from the water.

The EPA uses chloramines and copper to treat our drinking water.

The EPA allows copper in drinking water up to 1.3ppm. Since copper does not biodegrade or go away on its own, it can build up. The EPA also uses chloramines to kill harmful organisms in drinking water. These chloramines in pool water can increase the combined chlorine level and need to be oxidized.

Nitrates and Phosphates cause a chlorine demand.

When nitrates and phosphates come in contact with an oxidizing agent like chlorine (hypochlorous acid) nothing will happen since it is in its preferred oxidation state. If a compound cannot be oxidized then it does not readily react. The only things that contribute to chlorine demand are things that use up the hypochlorous acid.

High levels of ammonia can contribute to a chlorine demand.

Ammonia can react with hypochlorous acid, but it happens quickly and can be overcome through breakpoint chlorination. Watch out for using fertilizers near a pool, many contain ammonia.

There is a product that will turn the pool a certain color if someone urinates in the water.

This is a long standing joke. There is not a product to detect when someone urinates in the pool. However, urinating in a swimming pool is not a joke. It will very quickly deplete the free chlorine and produce those irritating and odorous chloramines.

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