

PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION INFORMATION BULLETIN

INTERPRETATION MANUAL

SWIMMING POOLS/SPAS /SHOWERING



QUESTION:

Why should you shower before entering a public swimming, wading, or spa pool?

BACKGROUND:

There are a growing number of disease outbreaks at public pools. Bathers bring in much of the dirt and disease organisms. Showering before entering the water is one way we can have cleaner, safer water in which to swim. A recent survey showed that just 26% of parents thought showering before swimming was very important, while 40% of parents thought it was somewhat important, and **34%** thought it was not important.¹

There is growing concern that the treatment of the pool water can create small amounts of harmful or irritating chemicals called disinfectant byproducts, as the pool reacts with the dirt brought into the pool. Some of these chemicals can be inhaled, ingested or absorbed through the skin. An indication of this is eye, nose, throat and lung irritation.

Showering washes off as much as 50% or more of the oils, fecal matter, and bacteria before it can get into the pool: the pool uses fewer chemicals and has cleaner water. When people don't shower, the pool equipment has to work harder to stay ahead of swimmers to keep the water clean.

64% of parents know the importance of not swallowing the pool water, but 28% of parents believe that the preventing illness is only the responsibility of the facility staff. . Preventing illness and lowering harmful chemicals has to be a team effort. The pool operator needs the help of every bather. Going from the exercise machines to the pool (without a shower) at the local health club makes it hard to keep the pool water clean and safe.

Before entering the pool, take a cleansing shower to remove dirt, oils, sweat, bacteria, etc. Shower **after** swimming, to remove the chlorine. Not showering can give your skin that swimming pool smell and can sometimes produce irritation.

INTERPRETATION:

Shower before entering the pool or spa to help keep the pool water clean. Take hourly bathroom breaks to also help keep the pool clean. Do not swallow the water, and avoid taking it into your mouth. Everyone needs to help keep the pool clean and healthy.

¹University of Michigan, C.S. Mott Children's Hospital poll conducted nationwide by Knowledge Network, Inc.