



DATCP Emphasizes Chemical Safety when Operating and Using Swimming Pools

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MADISON – With the arrival of warmer weather, swimming pools around the state are gearing up for crowds coming to cool off. As part of Healthy and Safe Swimming Week May 20-26, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) reminds public pool operators, residential pool owners, and individuals using pools to help prevent exposure to pool chemicals. Public health data from 2008-2016 shows Wisconsin had 464 reports of individuals who were injured or became ill at a public pool. Of those individuals, over half became ill due to chemicals in a public pool.

“Exposure to pool chemicals has the potential for lifelong health complications and sometimes even death. Protecting swimmers from this type of hazard should be every pool operator’s priority,” said Dr. Steve Ingham, DATCP’s Division of Food and Recreational Safety administrator. “Our staff work with local municipalities and business owners to provide chemical safety information and ensure the proper equipment is in place to prevent chemical-related illnesses in pools.”

While chemicals help maintain a pool’s water quality by killing germs that could make people sick, there is also a risk of injury to those handling the chemicals. Pool operators and owners need to ensure they are taking the following steps when handling pool chemicals in order to prevent injuries:

- Read and follow directions on product labels.
- Wear appropriate safety equipment, such as goggles, when handling pool chemicals. Check product labels for directions on what to wear.
- Safely secure pool chemicals to protect people, particularly young children, and animals.
- Add pool chemicals poolside **only** when directed by product label and when no one is in the water. Handfeeding chemicals should never be done to maintain daily disinfection residuals.
- Never mix different pool chemicals with each other.
- Pre-dissolve pool chemicals **only** when directed by the label.
- Add pool chemicals to water – **never** add water to a pool chemical.

Individuals can also protect themselves from pool chemicals by using test strips to sample the water prior to getting in the pool. Most local retailers and pool supply stores sell test strips. Following the manufacturer’s directions, you can use the test strips to see if the water falls within the following safe general levels:

- pH: 7.2-7.8
- Free chlorine:
 - Whirlpool: 3-10 ppm
 - Pool: 1-10 ppm
- Bromine:
 - Whirlpool: 7-20 ppm
 - Pool: 3-20 ppm

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If you find any problems during your self-inspection, do not get in the water. Tell the person in charge so the problem can be addressed. Individuals can also file a complaint with DATCP by calling (608) 224-4714 or emailing datcpfoodcomplaintsemergencyresponse@wi.gov. More information about filing a complaint is available at https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/RecFacilityComplaint.aspx.

To learn more about preventing chemical exposures in pools, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/aquatics-professionals/preventing-pool-chemical-events.html>. Healthy and Safe Swimming Week is a public safety initiative to raise awareness about maximizing the health benefits of swimming by minimizing the risk of illness and injury. During 2015-2017, pool chemical injuries led to an estimated 13,500 emergency department visits. More than half of the injuries occurred at a residence, and about one third of the injuries affected kids less than 18 years old. For more information visit <https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/observances/hss-week/index.html>.

DATCP's Division of Food and Recreational Safety licenses and inspects nearly 24,000 food, lodging, and recreational establishments; including public pools. Locations of public pools can include schools, hotels, resorts, parks, campgrounds, hospitals, apartments, condominiums, clubs, and more. To learn more about licensing requirements for public swimming pools, visit https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/WaterRecreation.aspx.

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