



County of Yolo

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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NATIONAL RECREATIONAL WATER ILLNESS PREVENTION WEEK

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Woodland, CA—The week preceding Memorial Day (May 17–23, 2009) has been designated as National Recreational Water Illness Prevention Week.

The goal of this observance is to raise awareness about healthy swimming behaviors, including ways to prevent recreational water illnesses (RWIs) and injuries. RWIs are illnesses spread by swallowing, breathing in vapors of, or having contact with contaminated water in swimming pools, water parks, spas, interactive fountains, lakes, rivers, or oceans. Injuries at aquatics facilities can occur in or out of the water.

“We are lucky to live in a region where we can enjoy our pools for a good amount of time in the spring and summer. But with that comes additional precautions we need to take to ensure the swimming experience is a safe one,” states Dr. Joseph Iser, Yolo County Health Department Director-Health Officer.

The theme for this year’s RWI Prevention Week focuses on injuries associated with pool chemicals. Pool chemicals make the water where we swim safer by protecting us from germs; however, these same chemicals can also cause injuries if they are not properly handled. This type of preventable injury leads to thousands of emergency room visits each year. Public pool operators and residential pool owners can protect themselves and swimmers by taking these key steps:

- ALWAYS secure pool chemicals: Keep children and animals away.
- ALWAYS read product name and manufacturer’s directions before each use.
- ALWAYS use appropriate protective gear, such as safety glasses and gloves, when handling pool chemicals.
- NEVER mix chlorine products with each other, acid, or other substances.

To access a complete set of prevention recommendations, visit www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming/pdf/pool_chem_assoc_inj.pdf.

The best way to prevent RWIs is to keep germs out of the pool in the first place. Everyone can help create healthy swimming experiences this summer by following these six healthy swimming steps:

- PLEASE don’t swim when you have diarrhea.
- PLEASE don’t swallow pool water.

- PLEASE practice good hygiene. Shower with soap before swimming and wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers.
- PLEASE take your kids on bathroom breaks or check diapers often.
- PLEASE change diapers in a bathroom or a diaper-changing area and not at poolside.
- PLEASE wash your children thoroughly (especially the rear end) with soap and water before they go swimming.

Recreational water venues are important sites for exercise and leisure. To make this summer a Healthy Swimming experience, the Yolo County Health Department Environmental Health Division and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention urge swimmers to continue to enjoy swimming, but only after adopting healthy swimming behaviors to reduce the risk of recreational water illnesses.

“Summer can be a time when work slows down a little for some people. For us, it can be a very busy time of year,” says Bruce Sarazin, Director of the Environmental Health Division. Although pool inspections can be done year-round, there is heightened surveillance for water illnesses because of the increase in the number of people using facilities.

The mission of the Yolo County Environmental Health Division is to protect and enhance the quality of life of Yolo County residents by identifying, assessing, mitigating, and preventing environmental hazards. It conducts inspections for a total of 346 public pools and spas in Yolo County. These include pools and spas found at hotels, motels, apartments, health clubs, and homeowner associations.

For more information about Recreational Water Illness Prevention Week and Healthy Swimming, contact Yolo County Environmental Health at (530) 666-8646 or www.yolohealth.org or visit the website for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming>.

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