



Healthy Swimming/Recreational Water

Healthy Swimming & Recreational Water Home

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Vomit and Blood Contamination of Pool Water

Check for existing guidelines from your local or state regulatory agency before use. Healthy Swimming recommendations do not replace existing state or local regulations or guidelines.


The most common germs spread through recreational water are ones that cause diarrheal illnesses and skin rashes. These germs are spread by swallowing or by skin exposure to water that has been contaminated with germs. Coming into contact with vomit and/or blood in pool water is unlikely to spread illness.

Vomit in Pool Water

Vomiting in the pool while swimming is a common event. Often, vomiting results from swallowing too much water, meaning that the vomit is probably not infectious. However, if the contents of the stomach are vomited, it is important to act immediately.

Responding to a vomit incident (when vomit contains more than regurgitated water)

The germs most likely to be spread by vomit are noroviruses (also known as Norwalk-like viruses).

Respond to the vomit incident as you would respond to a formed fecal incident, using [CDC's Fecal Incident Response Recommendations for Pool Staff](#)  [PDF - 582 kb]. The time and chlorine level combinations needed to kill noroviruses and *Giardia* are similar. Since killing *Giardia* is the basis for CDC's formed fecal incident response recommendations, this protocol should be adequate for disinfecting a potentially infectious vomit incident.

Blood in Pool Water

Germs found in blood (for example, Hepatitis B virus or HIV) are spread when infected blood or certain body fluids get into the body and bloodstream (for example, by sharing needles or by sexual contact). Chlorine kills germs found in blood and CDC is not aware of any instances in which a person has become infected with these germs after being exposed to a blood spill in a pool.

Does chlorine kill the germs in blood?

Yes. These germs do not survive long when diluted into properly chlorinated pool water.

Swimmers want something to be done after a blood spill. Should the pool be closed for a short period of time?

There is no public health reason to recommend closing the pool after a blood spill. However, some pool staff choose to do so temporarily to satisfy patrons.



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