

Wading Pool Safety for Parents

The Minnesota Department of Health encourages you and your children to have a safe, fun, and healthy swimming experience. Here are frequently asked questions that may help you make safe decisions.

The drain cover on the wading pool is loose or missing. Is this a hazard?

Yes. A pool drain can generate a powerful suction that can entrap swimmers. Broken or missing drain covers should be immediately repaired or replaced before anyone is allowed in the pool. If you notice a missing, loose, or broken drain cover, do not allow anyone to use the pool. Notify the pool operator, maintenance person, or lifeguard immediately.

Is the pool required to have a lifeguard?

No. When no lifeguard is on duty at a public pool, a warning sign must be posted. The sign must alert swimmers that no lifeguard is on duty, and children must not use the pool without an adult in attendance.

There is a strong chlorine smell. Is that normal?

No. A well-maintained pool should have little or no odor. A strong chemical smell is a sign of a maintenance problem. Notify the pool operator, maintenance person, or lifeguard immediately.

The water is cloudy. Should I allow my children to use the pool?

No. Cloudy water is a sign of a maintenance problem. If the water is cloudy, or you can't see the bottom of the pool, do not use the pool. Notify the pool operator, maintenance person, or lifeguard immediately.

Are swim diapers leak-proof?

No. Swim diapers may give parents and pool operators a false sense of security. They are not leak-proof and can still contaminate the pool. Swim diapers are not a solution for a child with diarrhea. Swim diapers are not a substitute for frequent diaper-changing.

There is foam and a scum line around the pool. Is that normal?

No. A scum line around the edge of the pool and large amounts of foam in the pool are signs that the pool is not being properly maintained. Do not use the pool if you see these conditions. Notify the pool operator, maintenance person, or lifeguard immediately.

Can people get sick with vomiting and diarrhea from swimming in a pool?

Yes. Outbreaks of vomiting and diarrhea can occur from contaminated water in a pool. In most cases, if the pool is being properly maintained, the chlorination and filtration system will eliminate germs that can make you and your children sick. It is very important that you (or your children) do not enter the pool if sick with diarrhea. If you believe you or your child became ill after swimming in a pool, please contact your local health department.

Can people get a rash from swimming in a pool?

Yes. A skin infection can occur if the pool is not being properly maintained. The rash usually appears within a few days of swimming in contaminated water. Most rashes clear up in a few days without medical treatment. However, if your rash persists, consult your healthcare provider.

Questions you can ask the pool operator, maintenance person, or lifeguard:

- **Who is the certified trained operator?** Each public pool in Minnesota must have a trained operator who is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the pool whenever the pool is open for use. A copy of the trained operator's certificate must be posted at the pool facility. You may ask to see the certificate.

- **Is the drain cover checked every day to ensure it is securely attached?** Operators are responsible for ensuring the pool is properly maintained, including checking to be sure the drain cover is securely in place.
- **Is this pool licensed and inspected by the health department?** Current Minnesota law requires public pools at food/beverage establishments and lodging facilities to have a license. Pending legislation would require a license for all public pools (including, but not limited to, hotels, campgrounds, manufactured home parks, resorts, schools, fitness centers, apartment and condominium buildings, and homeowners' associations).
- **Were any violations noted during the last inspection?** Licensed pools are required to be inspected by the Minnesota Department of Health or local health departments at least once every 12 months. When violations of the Pool Code are noticed during an inspection, they are noted on the inspection form which is given to the pool operator. You may ask to see a copy of the inspection report.
- **Are chlorine levels of the water checked at least once every day?** Chlorine levels, along with several other measurements, must be checked and recorded every day the pool is open for use.

General reminders for healthy swimming:

- Remember to keep an eye on your child at all times. Kids can drown in seconds and in silence.
- Do not swallow the pool water. In fact, avoid getting water in your mouth.
- Practice good hygiene. Take a shower before swimming and wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers. Germs on your body end up in the water.
- Do not swim when you have diarrhea. This is especially important for kids in diapers. You can

spread germs in the water and make other people sick.

- Take your kids on bathroom breaks or check diapers often. Waiting until you hear "I have to go" may mean that it's already too late.
- Change diapers in a bathroom and not at poolside. Germs can spread to surfaces and objects in and around the pool and spread illness.
- Wash your child thoroughly (especially the rear end) with soap and water before swimming. Everyone has invisible amounts of fecal matter on their bottoms that ends up in the pool.

For more information on these healthy swimming reminders, visit [Healthy Swimming | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-swimming/) (<https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-swimming/>).

If you feel the pool is not being properly maintained, contact your local health department. For more information on pool rules, visit [Public Swimming Pools](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/recreation/pools/index.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/recreation/pools/index.html>).

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