Clean It Up, Swimmers

Pools are great for perfecting your backstroke or relaxing on your favorite float. But they can also spread diarrhea and other illnesses. Germs don’t jump into the water like we do. They surf in on people’s bodies. But what about chlorine? Healthy pools don’t have a strong chemical smell.

Pool chemicals kill most germs within minutes, but some live for days. Chemicals also break down pee, poop, sweat, and other gunk from swimmers’ bodies. But this uses up the chemicals, leaving less available to kill germs. Chemically treated pools may have reeked of chlorine when they were new. Those chemicals—not chlorine—make your eyes red and sting, your nose run, and make you cough.

What’s in your cannonball? Microbes are tiny living organisms. Some microbes can make you sick. Here are the microbes and gunk the average swimmer can bring into the pool:

- Hair: 10 million microbes
- Spit: 8 million microbes in a single drop
- Hands: 5 million microbes
- Poop: 140 billion microbes
- A kid brings 10 grams of poop—the weight of 4 pennies—with 10 trillion microbes
- Nose, mouth, skin: Billions of microbes
- Skin products: Lotions, cosmetics, soaps
- Sweat: 1 or 2 soda cans
- Pee: 1 cup

Now think about how much of that same water you swallow in 45 minutes of swimming:

- Adults: 1 tablespoon
- Kids: 2 ½ tablespoons

That’s more than enough to make you sick!

Here are the steps for healthier swimming:

- Stay out of the water if you have diarrhea.
- Shower before you get into the water.
- Don’t pee or poop in the water.
- Don’t swallow the water.

Keep germs out of the water and water out of your mouth. The pool is only as clean as you are!

www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming