



Go Swimming This Winter!

By the Water Quality & Health Council

Looking for a fun way to stay fit this winter? Consider swimming in an indoor pool. Swimming provides a great workout for the whole body—core (including abdomen), arms, legs, glutes and back, according to [WebMD](#). It helps increase flexibility and strength without taxing the joints, a welcome advantage for people with arthritis. And feeling buoyant in the water can be both relaxing and soothing, reducing mental stress.



Indoor Pool Air Quality

One potential deterrent to indoor pool swimming is the strong chemical odor around some indoor pools. We have addressed the phenomenon popularly known as "too much chlorine in the pool" numerous times, but it bears repeating here: The irritating chemical odor around some pools is not due to chlorine, but to certain substances formed when chlorine disinfectant combines with nitrogen-containing contaminants brought into the pool by swimmers.

To compound matters, inadequate air exchange over the pool contributes to the build-up of irritants in the indoor pool space. If your indoor pool air is irritating, speak to the pool manager about air flow in the room, but consider your own personal "swimmer hygiene" as well.

Why is chlorine added to pool water anyway? Chlorine-based disinfectants are needed to control waterborne germs, helping to keep pool water safe for swimmers. Chlorine's presence is non-negotiable (it's even present in "salt" pools), so to minimize irritants forming, swimmer hygiene must be addressed. Many swimmers do not realize how much influence their hygiene has on pool water quality. Swimmers should shower before entering the pool and refrain from "peeing in the pool." Showering thoroughly with soap removes body oils, perspiration, makeup, lotions and traces of urine and fecal matter from the skin. When chlorine combines with these substances, there is less of it available to destroy the germs in the water that can make swimmers sick. Inadequate

pool chlorine levels can lead to swimmer's diarrhea and swimmer's ear, for example. And peeing in the pool, no matter how stealthily it can be done, is not cool!

A Family Affair

Swimming can be a family affair. Parents, swimming is an "electronic gadget-free" activity! The pool is a unique environment in which to connect family members across the generations. The buoyancy of pool water is a great equalizer as older swimmers are able to avoid high impact to their aching joints. Older family members can help teach younger ones to swim and then race them across the pool.

Ensuring that each family member can swim is an investment that can pay dividends over a lifetime. In addition to being a life-saving skill, swimming can enhance the quality of life. A variety of outdoor recreational activities in and around the water, including boating, fishing, water-skiing and more, become available and enjoyable for confident swimmers.

So, as counter-intuitive as it may seem to locate your swim suit and goggles and head for the pool when the weather forecast includes ice and snow, consider the benefits *and the fun* of winter indoor swimming.