



Maximizing Healthy Fun in the Kiddie Pool

By Chris Wiant, MPH, PhD

Each summer, parents of toddlers and young children delight in introducing their offspring to the kiddie pool. With its shallow water, plastic pails and inflatable toys, the kiddie pool is a haven of fun, discovery and social interaction for the youngest pool patrons. Spending time in the kiddie pool to acclimate a toddler to the water could be the first step in cultivating a life-long swimmer. All terrific!

Now for the disturbing news: According to a [new report](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), of all the aquatic venues that were closed because of serious health and safety violations in 2013, kiddie and wading pools lead the pack.



Specifically, in the five US states with the most public pools, one in five wading pools (20 percent) had to be closed immediately upon inspection due to serious health and safety violations.

The Diaper Set

It probably comes as no surprise that the diaper set provides specific challenges to pool water quality. [CDC reports](#), "Young children are more likely to experience acute gastrointestinal illnesses...and are more likely to contaminate the water because they either are incontinent or have inadequate toileting and hygiene skills." Unfortunately, there is no such thing as a leak-proof diaper, and they do leak. CDC also notes that "as much as 10 grams of fecal material can rinse off a young child's perianal surface and into the water." Add to this the fact that discovery for toddlers is often linked to tasting, or in this case, drinking pool water, and we have a potentially risky combination of factors.

Better Water Quality in the Kiddie Pool

The most frequently reported violations in wading pools in 2013 involved disinfectant level, pH and automated chemical feeder violations. Given the water quality challenges associated with kiddie pools, this is a significant finding that can help inform solutions. Here's our best advice to parents and caregivers of young children at the kiddie pool:

- ✓ Don't allow your child into the pool unless you have checked the pool water quality. Some pools post inspection results online. Alternatively, you can be your own pool inspector and obtain

instant readings. Use a pool test kit to ensure the pH and free chlorine level of the water are within acceptable ranges. If readings are outside of the acceptable range, lose no time in approaching the pool manager. This summer you can order a free pool test kit at www.healthypools.org.

- ✓ Keep sick children and those experiencing diarrhea out of the pool.
- ✓ Change swim diapers frequently in the restroom, and take children who are newly potty-trained to the restroom at frequent intervals.
- ✓ Teach children not to drink pool water.

Water play in the kiddie pool is a fun, social activity for very young children. Rather than discouraging parents and care-givers from visiting these venues, we recommend reaping the benefits of the kiddie pool by actively managing the risks.

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