

## **PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION INFORMATION BULLETIN INTERPRETATION MANUAL**

### **SWIMMING POOLS/SPAS /SHOWERING**

#### **QUESTION:**

Why should you, and your kids shower **before** entering a public swimming, wading, or spa pool?

#### **BACKGROUND:**

There are a growing number of disease outbreaks at public pools. Bathers bring in much of the dirt and disease organisms. Showering before entering the water is one way we can all have cleaner, safer water in which to swim. A recent survey showed that just 26% of parents thought showering before swimming was very important, while 40% of parents thought it was somewhat important, and 34% thought it was not important.<sup>1</sup>

There is growing concern that the treatment of the pool water can create small amounts of harmful or irritating chemicals called disinfectant byproducts, as the pool reacts with the dirt brought into the pool. Some of these chemicals can be inhaled, ingested or absorbed through the skin. Examples of this would be eye, ear, nose, throat, and lung irritation.

Showering washes off as much as 50% or more of the oils, fecal matter, and bacteria before it can get into the pool; therefore, the pool uses fewer chemicals and has cleaner water. When people don't shower, the pool equipment and chemicals have to work harder to stay ahead of swimmers to keep the water clean and all swimmers healthy.

Approximately 64% of parents know the importance of not swallowing the pool water, but 28% of parents believe that preventing illness is only the responsibility of the facility staff. The truth is, individual bathers can -- and do -- make the single biggest impact on water quality. Preventing illness and lowering harmful chemicals has to be a team effort. The pool operator needs the help of every bather. Going from the exercise machines to the pool (without a shower) at the local health club makes it hard to keep the pool water clean and safe.

**Before** entering the pool or spa, take a cleansing shower to remove dirt, oils, sweat, bacteria, etc. Shower **after** swimming (pool or spa), to remove the chlorine. Not showering can give your skin that swimming pool smell and can sometimes produce irritation. Failing to take a nude shower after using a spa may increase your risk of dermal irritation (i.e. Pseudomonas), especially in areas where swim wear fits tightly (e.g. waistbands, or women's top straps.)

#### **INTERPRETATION:**

**Shower before entering the pool or spa to help keep the pool water clean.** Take hourly bathroom breaks to also help keep the pool clean. Do not swallow the water, and avoid taking it into your mouth. Everyone needs to help keep the pool clean and healthy.

<sup>1</sup>University of Michigan, C.S. Mott Children's Hospital poll conducted nationwide by Knowledge Network, Inc.