

Diving Into Disease



Reading the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Web pages on recreational water illnesses (RWIs) is enough to make someone never want set foot in a swimming pool again. From the list of pathogens that can cause RWIs (which includes some nasty fellows, such as *Cryptosporidium*, *Legionella*, *E. coli* and more) to statistics on sources of disease ("on average, people have about 0.14 grams of feces on their bottoms"), the cringe factor is high.

Thankfully, we have technologies to combat these potentially deadly pathogens. Nevertheless, in the last two decades, RWI outbreaks have increased. According to CDC data, *Crypto* has become the most common cause of swimming-related diarrheal illness, with reported cases jumping

200% between 2004 and 2008.

For decades, chlorine has been the tried-and-true disinfection agent for swimming pools and spas, and at proper levels, it does help keep swimmers safe from disease. But this trusty friend fails us in one major way: *Crypto* is resistant to chlorine, and can live for days even in chlorine-treated pools. Other treatment options, such as ultraviolet (UV), are needed to eliminate the *Crypto* threat.

In the U.S., there is no overarching federal agency tasked with regulating recreational water facilities like pools, water parks and fountains. All regulation is relegated to state or local agencies, leaving enormous potential for variation in compliance and oversight. To help streamline pool safety, CDC is working to develop the Model Aquatic Health Code (MAHC), which provides guidelines not only on disinfection, but also on prevention of drowning and swimming-related injuries. This may be a step in the right direction, but adoption of the MAHC is still largely voluntary.

What it all comes down to is that pool owners—whether the facility is a public commercial pool or a backyard residential pool—are responsible for ensuring that their pool water is properly treated and disinfected.

Chlorine is so firmly associated with pools and swimming—can't you just imagine that typical pool smell now?—that many may not realize that other technologies, such as UV and ozone, also can be involved in the treatment process to ensure elimination of all pathogens. Consider taking the time to educate your pool- or spa-owning customers about the dangers of RWIs and the importance of regular testing and proper treatment, including the various technologies available. Not only will you help raise awareness of pool and spa water treatment, but it also could bring in some additional sales and leads.

Do you have a pool or spa water treatment success story to share? E-mail us at wqpeditor@sgcmail.com to tell us about it.

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