



101 Critical Days of Summer

Safety Tip #4 – Pool Chemicals



The injury toll caused by exposures to swimming pool chemicals is higher than you might expect. CDC's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* has published a new study timed for 2009 National Recreational Water Illness Prevention Week (May 18-24) that says these preventable injuries account for as many as 5,200 emergency room visits each year. Almost half of the 2007 injuries occurred at a residence.

While the pool chemicals are necessary to destroy pathogens and maintain a clean swimming environment, people are hurt by inhaling fumes when they open pool chemical containers, attempting to pre-dissolve pool chemicals or handling them improperly, or having the chemicals splash into their eyes. Learn how to avoid toxic disasters and keep your swimming pool and spa area clean, safe and the refreshing source of fitness and relaxation it's supposed to be.

Here's a list of **DOs** and **DON'Ts**.....



DO Read the Product Label

Don't rely on the shape of the bottle or brand name before applying or mixing chemicals into your pool or spa. Know what you're working with and double-check by reading the label.

DO Wear Protective Clothing When Handling Pool Chemicals

That would mean a lab coat or old shirt, preferably with long sleeves. The same goes for long pants. The reason: if any of the chemicals spill or get splashed on your arms or legs -- bare skin -- it can be dangerous. A less traumatic but still important reason to wear the old lab coat or smock is to protect your regular clothing from getting chemical stains on them. Don't wear your newest and favorite pair of jeans to do this task. Don't go barefoot or wear sandals -- an old pair of shoes is a wise "fashion" choice here.

On the subject of protective gear, go ahead and wear a pair of safety glasses (not your Oakleys) and gloves.

DO Use Caution When Opening Containers to Avoid Splashing

The same rule applies to opening containers of dry chemicals, to minimize the amount of dust generated when handling powdered or granulated chemicals.

DO Store Chemicals in a Cool, Dry Place

Make that a cool, dry, clean, well-ventilated place. Store chemicals separate from each other (for example chlorine away from acids). Don't leave pool chemicals lying near the pool, with the hot summer sun blazing on them.

DO Store Pool Chemicals Out of the Reach of Children & Pets

If pool chemicals are accessible, they obviously pose a risk to curious children and pets. Store chemicals high and dry.

DO Keep the Pool Chemical Storage Area Well-Maintained

Make sure you tighten lids on chemical containers, and don't toss the bottles into your storage area with the thought that you'll clean things up "later."



Do Use All of the Chemicals Before Disposal

Containers of partially filled pool chemicals can perforate or spill, creating a toxic hazard and adding to overloaded landfills and waste. Do not reuse empty chemical containers – when empty, rinse and dispose of container.

DO Wash Hands After Working with Pool Chemicals

Another good reason to wash your hands.

Do Maintain Chemical Treatments at the Proper Levels

Not sure what those proper levels should be? Get a pool test kit to check levels and follow the manufacturer's instructions.

<http://poolandpatio.about.com/od/maintainingyourpool/ss/pooltest.htm>

Do Have the Poison Center Hotline Number

If chemicals are inhaled, splashed on the skin or in the eyes, or swallowed, call the hotline number, 1-800-222-1222. Keep the number posted near the chemicals and near the telephone. Have the container with you when you call.

DON'T Increase Chemical Treatments to Compensate for a Dirty Pool

Remember: more or extra is not better.



DON'T Mix Chemicals or Chlorine Products

That includes acid and other substances.

DON'T Dispose in Trash or Sewer

Any spilled or unused chemicals should be disposed of according to the instructions on the label.

DON'T Store Liquids Above Solids

Being above the solids, the liquids could spill on them, creating a toxic mix.



DON'T Allow Chemicals to Come in Contact with Oil, Grease, Acid, Etc.

Again, a bad mix. Also don't let chemicals contact organic material.

DON'T Smoke in the Vicinity of Pool Chemicals

This includes where the chemicals are stored or used. It seems like this would be a no-brainer, but people get pretty casual and self-permissive in their own surroundings and may forget to put out their cigarettes.

DON'T Use Other Cleaning Compounds When Cleaning Up Chemical Spills

You accidentally sloshed some chlorine on the pool deck. Please don't clean it up with another cleaning solvent. Again, that don't-mix-chemicals rule.

NEVER add chemicals to the pool/spa water while swimmers are using the pool/spa.

With all of these safety rules in mind, it can sometimes seem like enjoying your pool or spa is a lot of work. It is, but well worth it. They will help to minimize the risk of injury when you are attempting to keep your pool clean and sanitary for the people who enjoy using it. Lazy summer days spent drifting on floats, or luxurious swimming through clean blue waters can be very relaxing. Enjoy it!!

Other sites for pool chemical safety:

<http://www.bfhd.wa.gov/pdfs/POOL%20CHEMICAL%20SAFETY.pdf>

<http://www.epa.gov/oem/docs/chem/spalert.pdf>

http://www.cdc.gov/HealthySwimming/pdf/pool_chem_as_soc_inj.pdf

This document was derived from multiple sources. Sources are available upon request in the 157 ARW/SE Office.

**Safety first... because accidents last!!!
Your Risk Management Office**