



Facts About *Giardia* and Swimming Pools

What is *Giardia* and how can it affect me?

Giardia (gee-ARE-dee-uh) is a **germ that causes diarrhea**. This germ is found in the fecal matter of a person who has been infected by *Giardia*. It has a tough outer shell that allows it to survive for up to 45 minutes even in properly chlorinated pools.

Giardia is a common cause of recreational water illness (disease caused by germs spread through pool water) in the United States and can cause prolonged diarrhea (for 1–2 weeks).

How is *Giardia* spread in pools?

Giardia is **spread by swallowing water** that has been contaminated with fecal matter containing *Giardia*.

You share the water—and the germs in it—with **every person** who enters the pool. This means that just one person with diarrhea can easily contaminate the water. Swallowing even a small amount of pool water that has been contaminated with the *Giardia* germ can make you sick.

Giardia can also be spread by swallowing contaminated water from water parks, interactive fountains, water play areas, hot tubs, lakes, rivers, springs, ponds, streams, and oceans.

How do I protect myself, my family and other swimmers?

Take action! Because *Giardia* can stay alive for almost an hour even in well-maintained pools, stopping the germ from getting there in the first place is essential. Making sure that your pool has the right disinfectant and pH levels to kill *Giardia* is also critical.

Three Steps for All Swimmers

- > Don't swim when you have diarrhea. You can spread germs in the water and make other people sick.
- > Don't swallow the pool water. Avoid getting water in your mouth.
- > Practice good hygiene. Shower with soap before swimming and wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers. Germs on your body end up in the water.

Three Steps for Parents of Young Kids

- > Take your kids on bathroom breaks or check diapers often. Waiting to hear “I have to go” may mean that it's too late.
- > Change diapers in a bathroom or a diaper-changing area and not at poolside. Germs can spread in and around the pool.
- > Wash your child thoroughly (especially the rear end) with soap and water before they go swimming. Invisible amounts of fecal matter can end up in the pool.

Three Steps for Testing Pool Water

- > Purchase pool test strips at your local home improvement or pool supply store (be sure to check the expiration date).
- > Use the test strips to check pool water for adequate chlorine (1–3 parts per million) and pH (7.2–7.8) levels.
- > If you find improper chlorine and/or pH levels, tell the pool operator or owner immediately.

SWIMMERS AND PARENTS

For more information on preventing illness and injury at the pool,
visit www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/

For further instructions on how to use pool and hot tub test strips,
visit www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/pools/pool-spa-test-strip-instructions.html

POOL OPERATORS

For guidelines and resources on how to prevent *Giardia* and other germs from contaminating the water,
visit www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/audience-aquatics-staff.html

