



**Public Health**  
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**Greene County**



## Greene County Public Health

Melissa Howell MS, MBA, MPH, RN, RS, Health Commissioner  
Kevin L. Sharrett, MD, Medical Director

# Press Release

For Immediate Release  
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## Healthy & Safe Swimming Week 2020

**XENIA, OH**—Greene County Public Health officials want to remind families that the week before Memorial Day (May 18-24, 2020) is Healthy and Safe Swimming Week. While the goal is to bring awareness to safe swimming, minimizing the risk of illness and injury, and to promote the associated health benefits, this year brings additional challenges during the current COVID-19 pandemic. For public aquatic venues, it is important to consider strategies that will encourage healthy hygiene, which includes:

- Washing hands often and covering coughs and sneezes
- Encouraging the use of cloth face coverings as feasible. It is advised **not** to wear them in the water.
- Staying home if you have COVID-19 symptoms, have tested positive for COVID-19, or were exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days
- Having adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene (e.g. - soap, hand sanitizer, tissues, paper towels)
- Following all posted signage and directions designed to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and maintain social distancing, remaining at least 6-feet apart from those you don't live with.

For additional information, please view the Ohio Department of Health guidance document for Local and Public Pools and Aquatic Centers at: <https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/static/responsible/Pools-Aquatic-Centers.pdf>.

Just 2 ½ hours of physical activity every week, including water-based physical activity, can benefit everyone's health. Each of us plays a role in preventing illnesses and injuries related to the water we swim, play, relax in, and share—this summer and year-round.

### Illnesses caused by germs in the places we swim

During 2000–2014, nearly 500 outbreaks were linked to pools, hot tubs/spas, and water playgrounds. Most of the outbreaks were caused by the germs *Cryptosporidium* (or “Crypto”), *Legionella*, or *Pseudomonas*.

These germs can make swimmers sick if they swallow just a mouthful of contaminated water. Although most germs are killed within minutes by chlorine or bromine at the recommended levels, Crypto is a germ that can survive in properly treated water for more than 7 days.

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Here are a few simple and effective prevention steps we can all take:

- Backyard pool owners
  - Check the disinfectant level and pH at least twice per day
    - Make sure disinfectant level and pH level are correct
      - 1-10 parts per million (ppm) free chlorine or 3-8 ppm bromine
      - pH 7.2-7.8
- Everyone
  - Stay out of the water if you have diarrhea.
  - Shower before you get in the water.
  - Don't pee or poop in the water.
  - Don't swallow the water.
  - Every hour—everyone out!
    - Take kids on bathroom breaks.
    - Check diapers and change them in a bathroom or diaper changing area—not poolside—to keep germs away from the pool.
    - Reapply sunscreen.
  - Drink plenty of fluids.

### Dangers of Drowning

Every day, two children less than 15 years old die from drowning. It is the leading cause of injury death for children 1–4 years old. Help keep swimmers safe in the water by following these steps:

- Make sure everyone knows how to swim.
- Use U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets appropriately.
- Provide continuous, attentive supervision close to swimmers.
- Know CPR.
- Prevent access to water when pool is not in use.
  - Install and maintain barriers like 4-sided fencing and weight-bearing pool covers.
  - Use locks/alarms for windows and doors.

### Injuries caused by mishandling pool chemicals (for pool operators and residential pool owners)

Pool chemicals, like chlorine, are needed to protect swimmers' health. However, mishandling pool chemicals can cause serious injuries. Pool chemical injuries lead to about 4,500 U.S. emergency department visits each year, and over one-third of these preventable injuries are in children or teens. Follow these prevention steps:

- Read and follow directions on product labels.
- Wear appropriate safety equipment, such as goggles and masks, as directed, when handling pool chemicals.
- Secure pool chemicals to protect people and animals.

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- Add pool chemicals poolside ONLY when directed by product label and when no one is in the water.
- Prevent violent, potentially explosive, reactions.
  - NEVER mix different pool chemicals with each other, especially chlorine products with acid.
  - Pre-dissolve pool chemicals ONLY when directed by product label.
- Add pool chemical to water, NEVER water to pool chemical.

For more information about Greene County Public Health, visit the website at [www.gcph.info](http://www.gcph.info) or call 937-374-5600.

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