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Importance of Required Signs at Public Pools and Spas

New signage requirements for public swimming places went into effect on September 1, 2012. Though some of these signs seem to be stating the obvious, they are very necessary because many people do not know or actively practice safety steps to prevent drowning or the spread of a waterborne illness.

The "Keep Closed" sign is now a requirement because many people leave the gate or door open or unlatched. This presents a drowning hazard. Our inspectors regularly observe gates and doors that are propped open or simply do not latch because of a mechanical problem. The Pool Safely initiative states that gates, fences, and other barriers around the pool are [one of the essential components](#) of a safety system to prevent injuries or drownings. The "Keep Closed" sign serves as a reminder to pool users to keep the gate or door closed at all times to prevent a potential death.



Some people have questioned why the telephone number of the nearest emergency services unit must be posted. In some areas, dialing 911 routes you to a dispatch center that is far away. (By dialing the California Highway Patrol number, for example, you reach someone in Sacramento.) By providing a local number, you can be sure to reach local emergency responders. The new requirement for posting the address of the pool you're swimming at may seem counterintuitive, but if a visitor is using the pool, they may not know the physical address. You do not want to be searching for that type of information to tell the dispatcher when you're in the middle of an emergency.

We have also received questions like, "Doesn't everyone know that they shouldn't swim when they have diarrhea? Why does that sign need to be posted?" Contrary to popular belief, some people do swim when they have diarrhea or they allow their children to swim when ill. This is evidenced by the recent CDC study (see article below) which reported that almost 60% of public swimming pools have fecal contamination. A single bowel movement by an infected person can release millions of *Cryptosporidium* parasites into the pool water. Even if the vast majority of people do not swim with active diarrhea, all it takes is one infected person to contaminate the whole pool with *Cryptosporidium* or another waterborne disease. The sign also specifies that you should not swim if you've had diarrhea within the past 14 days. Although most people know that they shouldn't swim with active diarrhea, they may not know that 14 days is the limiting time frame - they may go back to swimming after just a week. However, they may still be shedding viruses or bacteria into the water. This sign is a helpful reminder for people not to swim after a recent diarrheal illness.

If you have any questions about pool signage requirements, please call us at (800) 442-2283.

Fecal Contamination in Pools

A recently published study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced that over half of public swimming pools are contaminated with fecal matter (poop). Some 58% of pools were positive for *E. coli* and 59% were positive for *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*. Public swimming places can become contaminated with feces after someone has an accident in the pool or if they do not wash themselves properly before entering the pool.

According to the CDC, "Chlorine and other disinfectants don't kill germs instantly. That's why it's important for

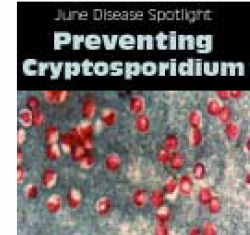
swimmers to protect themselves by not swallowing the water they swim in and to protect others by keeping feces and germs out of the pool by taking a pre-swim shower and not swimming when ill with diarrhea." If you have had diarrhea within the past 14 days, you should not swim.

To read more about the CDC study and ways you can avoid getting a waterborne illness, [click here](#). You can also visit the [CDC's Healthy Swimming webpage](#) for more information about how to keep you and your family safe this summer.



New Fact Sheet on Cryptosporidium

With the summer heat, many people will be going to a swimming pool to cool off. Did you know that you could be at risk of contracting cryptosporidiosis when you go swimming? Check out our new fact sheet about [Cryptosporidium](#) to learn how to prevent this waterborne disease.



If you have any questions or comments, please contact Amanda Gaspard, Health Education Specialist, at 800-442-2283 or Amanda.Gaspard@dph.sbcounty.gov.

