

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SWIMMING POOL SAFETY

Drowning is the **sixth** leading cause of unintentional death for children ages 1-17 years old in Georgia.<sup>1</sup> In 2021, 31 children in that age group drowned,<sup>2</sup> and there were 153 emergency room visits drowning and submersion.<sup>3</sup> **Most drownings of children ages 1 to 4 happen in swimming pools.**

## WATER-RELATED INJURIES IN THE U.S.

While the biggest threat to children around unexpected, unsupervised access to water is drowning, every year thousands of children are treated in the emergency room for non-fatal water-related injuries.<sup>4</sup>

### Estimated ER-Treated Injuries




	Younger than 5	5-14 years	Total <15 years
Average	4,800	1,400	6,200
2020	4,400	1,300	5,800
2019	5,100	1,200	6,300
2018	4,900	1,500	6,400

Source: U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission:  
National Electronic Injury Surveillance System




## SWIMMING POOL RULES AND REGULATIONS

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is responsible for ensuring public swimming pools are clean, healthy and safe. In addition to **adult supervision**, there are laws in place regarding fencing, pool drains, and clean water that are critical to pool safety.

### Public Pool Barriers<sup>5</sup>

-  All outdoor swimming pools and spas shall have a barrier (e.g., fence, safety cover, wall, building wall, or a combination) which completely surrounds or covers the pool or spa, and obstructs access.
-  Top of the barrier should be at least 4 feet high.
-  Pedestrian access gates should be self-closing and self-latching; other gates should have a self-latching device.

### Public Pool Drains<sup>6</sup>

-  Suction outlets must have been tested and meet approved standards.
-  The main drain must be visible through the water from the pool edge.
-  All drain covers and grates must meet appropriate standards.

### Clean Water

Children, 3 years and younger, and those not toilet-trained, are required to wear a swim diaper in a public swimming pool.<sup>7</sup>



## HOWEVER, IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW:

Swim diapers are not leak proof. Diarrhea-causing germs may be delayed from leaking into the water for a few minutes, but these germs still contaminate the water.<sup>8</sup>

## WHY POOL INSPECTIONS ARE IMPORTANT

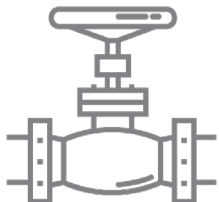
Germs that cause water illnesses can be spread in recreational settings when swallowing water that has been contaminated with **fecal matter**.<sup>9</sup> Appropriate levels of disinfectants kill most germs within minutes, but some can survive for days.<sup>10</sup>

Germ <sup>11</sup>	Symptoms Can Include:	Time It Takes to Kill or Inactivate Germs in Chlorinated Water <sup>12</sup>
<i>E.coli</i> O157:H7 Bacterium	Watery or bloody diarrhea, fever, abdominal cramps, nausea, and vomiting <sup>13</sup>	Less than 1 minute
Hepatitis A virus	Fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting abdominal pain, dark urine, diarrhea, clay-colored stool, joint pain, jaundice <sup>14</sup>	About 16 minutes
<i>Giardia</i> Parasite	Diarrhea, gas, greasy stools that tend to float, stomach or abdominal cramps, upset stomach or nausea/vomiting, dehydration (loss of fluids) <sup>15</sup>	About 45 minutes
<i>Crypto</i> Parasite	Watery diarrhea, stomach cramps or pain, dehydration, nausea, vomiting, fever, weight loss <sup>16</sup>	About 10.6 days

\* 1 part per million (ppm) free chlorine at pH 7.5 or less and a temperature of 77°F (25°C) or higher. Source: CDC<sup>8</sup>

## SWIMMING POOLS IN GEORGIA

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is the state agency that ensures public swimming pools are clean, healthy and safe. To ensure minimum standards are met, DPH regularly inspects public swimming pools. Public swimming pools must have:<sup>17</sup>



A clearly labeled emergency shutoff valve



A trained operator perform a minimum of 2 weekly visits and document conditions



Regular collection of water samples to test

## DPH's 7 PREVENTION STEPS FOR HEALTHY AND SAFE SWIMMING<sup>18</sup>



- **Closely supervise children in the water.**
- **Don't swim when you have diarrhea.**
- **Shower before you enter the pool.**
- **Don't swallow the water you swim in.**
- **Do not urinate in the water and always report fecal matter.**
- **Don't swim if pool drain covers are missing, broken, or can't clearly be seen.**
- **Report hazards to your local health department or environmental health office.**

## Sources for Swimming Pool Safety

- 1 Center for Disease Control and Prevention. "Web-Based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System: Fatal Injury Data." Accessed October 28, 2022. <https://webappa.cdc.gov/sasweb/ncipc/leadcause.html>
- 2 Georgia Bureau of Investigation. Annual Report Preview (2021). Power Point Presentation received October 27, 2022.
- 3 Georgia Department of Public Health. "Emergency Room Visits Web Query. Retrieved from Online Analytical Statistical Information System" Accessed October 28, 2022. <https://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/webquery/qryER.aspx>.
- 4 U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. "Pool or Spa Submersion: Estimated Nonfatal Drowning Injuries and Reported Drownings, 2018 Report." Accessed October 28, 2022. <https://www.poolsafely.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/2018-Submersion-Report-5-10-18.pdf>
- 5 Georgia Department of Public Health. "Rules and Regulations: Public Swimming Pools, Spas, and Recreational Water Parks: Chapter 511-3-5." Accessed October 28, 2022. <https://dph.georgia.gov/document/document/envhealthpoolschapter511-3-5newpdf/download>.
- 6 Ibid
- 7 Ibid
- 8 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Swim Diapers and Swim Pants." Accessed October 28, 2022. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/swimmers/swim-diapers-swim-pants.html>
- 9 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Fecal Incident and Outbreak Response." Accessed October 28, 2022. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/aquatics-professionals/fecalresponse.html>
- 10 Georgia Department of Public Health. "Health and Safe Swimming: Seven Prevention Steps for Healthy and Safe Swimming, Make a Splash: Share the Fun, Not the Germs". Accessed October 28, 2022. <https://dph.georgia.gov/document/document/health-and-safety-swimming-poster/download>.
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- 15 Center for Disease Control and Prevention. "Parasites- giardia." Accessed October 28, 2022. <https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/giardia/illness.html>
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- 17 Georgia Department of Public Health. "Rules and Regulations: Public Swimming Pools, Spas, and Recreational Water Parks: Chapter 511-3-5." Accessed October 28, 2022. <https://dph.georgia.gov/document/document/envhealthpoolschapter511-3-5newpdf/download>.
- 18 Georgia Department of Public Health. "Health and Safe Swimming: Seven Prevention Steps for Healthy and Safe Swimming, Make a Splash: Share the Fun, Not the Germs". Accessed October 28, 2022. <https://dph.georgia.gov/document/document/health-and-safety-swimming-poster/download>.