

Experts Clear the Water on the Colorful Myths Associated With Peeing in the Pool

*Mythical pee detecting dye? Nope. Chlorine causes red eye? Nope.
But "red eyes" is a colorful indicator that someone might have peed in the pool.*

WASHINGTON, D.C. — As the swimming season kicks off, health experts from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Water Quality and Health Council and the National Swimming Pool Foundation (NSPF) have teamed up to launch a campaign to stop people from peeing in the pool. To do so, they are busting a couple of colorful myths associated with this clandestine activity.

According to a new survey conducted by Survata on behalf of the Water Quality and Health Council, nearly half of Americans surveyed incorrectly believe that there is a chemical that is added to pools that turns a conspicuous color in the presence of pee. In the same survey, 71 percent also incorrectly blame chlorine for causing swimmers' eyes to become red and irritated.

"Chlorine and other disinfectants are added to a swimming pool to destroy germs. Peeing in a pool depletes chlorine and actually produces an irritant that makes people's eyes turn red," said Michele Hlavsa, chief of CDC's Healthy Swimming Program... "The solution isn't rocket science; it's common courtesy. Swimmers should use the pool to swim, the restroom to pee, and the showers to wash up before getting in the pool. It's that simple."

"There isn't a dye that turns red, it's the eyes that turn red. Swimmers' eyes are the real color indicator that someone might have peed in a pool," said Thomas M. Lachocki, CEO of the NSPF.

"That 'chlorine' smell at the pool isn't actually chlorine. What you smell are chemicals that form when chlorine mixes with pee, sweat, and dirt from swimmers' bodies," said Chris Wiant, Chair of the Water Quality and Health Council "These chemicals—not chlorine—can cause your eyes to become red and sting, make your nose run, and make you cough."

Busting the Pool Dye Myth

It's the most common pool myth of all time: If you pee in the pool the water will change color and everyone will know. Parents have long used the story of a chemical that changes color in the presence of pee to keep their children from peeing in the pool. The fact is there is no such dye that currently exists.

Busting the Chlorine/Red Eye Myth

When nitrogen-containing compounds found in pee, sweat, and dirt combine with chlorine, irritants are formed. These substances, not the chlorine itself, irritate the eyes, skin and

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respiratory system. In this case, more chlorine may actually need to be *added* to pool water to break down irritants, according to the Water Quality and Health Council.

Getting the Word Out

Lachocki added that swimming keeps us happy and healthy. We need more healthy swimming and less seeing red! The CDC and the American Chemistry Council also have collaborated on a brochure that includes key messages about healthy swimming, which include showering before swimming and not peeing in a pool. To order a free CDC brochure, go to www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/resources/brochures.html.

The Water Quality and Health Council is once again making free pool test kits available this summer through their Healthy Pools campaign. Swimmers can test their backyard pool or community pool to ensure it has a proper pH and chlorine level. Good pool chemistry combined with a few easy and effective healthy swimming steps will not only help reduce unwanted germs in the pool, but they can help reduce instances of red eye.

To order a free pool test kit offered as part of the Water Quality and Health Council's [award winning](#) summer Healthy Pools awareness initiative, please go to www.healthypools.org.

The survey was conducted by Survata, an independent research firm in San Francisco. Survata interviewed 1,500 online respondents between April 23, 2015 and April 28, 2015. The margin of error for the survey is 2.53%.

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